

THE DISCURSIVE REPRESENTATIONS OF BORDERLANDS:  
AN ANALYSIS OF VISUAL CULTURE AND CONCEPTIONS OF PLACE OCCURRING  
AT THE U.S.-MEXICO BORDER

by

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## **Abstract**

Geographical borders represent a clash of cultures. Those inhabiting or moving through borderlands struggle to maintain a sense of place and, in turn, an understanding of cultural collective memory. This project strives to understand how the visual and discursive elements that constitute the U.S.-Mexico border function rhetorically to communicate *difference* and establish *place*. By utilizing a social semiotics perspective, I analyzed visual rhetoric of the U.S.-Mexico border in the form of photographs and maps produced in both the United States and Mexico. Additionally, a theory of cultural memory was used to explore the confluence of events and rhetorical phenomena that shape the U.S.-Mexico border, and allow the U.S.-Mexico border to shape the rhetoric of the countries it divides. I argued that borders are inherently rhetorical and the intersection of visual elements, culture, place and memory make borders important to understand from an anthropological, and geographical perspective, as well as a rhetorical one. This project holds political and social implications for the relationship between the United States and Mexico, and reveals key findings regarding how cultural identity is negotiated in fragmented places like borderlands.

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## **CHAPTER 1 - Introduction**

Both as an effort to curb illegal immigration and provide increased homeland security, the United States passed The Secure Fence Act of 2006 – a law that approved construction of a physical barrier between the U.S. and Mexico. The passage of the act increased the number of border patrol agents from 9,000 to 12,000, more than doubled the amount of federal funding for border security, and authorized the construction of 700 miles of fence across the border – costing \$1 million per mile (Suau, 2008). Many in America see immigration from Mexico as a threat to U.S. nationalism (Demo, 2005), a drain on resources (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1999), and an underlying factor contributing to crime (Bowden, 2004). Yet others consider the fence a disregard for the philosophies under which the U.S. was founded and for the people the fence is designed to keep out. Kennedy (2006) states, “Mexican politicians accuse the U.S. of hypocrisy for enjoying the benefits of cheap Mexican labour but not being prepared to offer Mexican people a chance to cross the border legally.” The U.S.-Mexico border itself has been a site of controversy – an invisible line that has divided crime and poverty for years. However, the decision to construct a physical boundary between the two nations has only served to further problems occurring in the borderlands. In an age of increased globalization, legitimate questions are raised regarding the reasons and feasibility of closing one nation off from another.

For millennia, humans have created lines and divided land in order to claim their own space. The oldest known map was a petroglyph, (rock carving,) created in 2500 B.C. Now found in northern Italy, it indicates that the tendency to map has been a common thread of humanity for centuries. Although, the incentive to map may have been motivated more by the desire to help people to reach destinations than it did to divide land. It is understandable that even though

humans need to interact with and touch other humans, they also need to feel a sense of autonomy and control over their world. Understanding the physical terrain of the world one inhabits provides a step toward that autonomy. Harley (1989) explains that the original purpose for mapping was, “to produce a ‘correct’ relational model of the terrain,” but that cartographers eventually developed a “sense of the other,” when they discovered that not all maps produced the same image of the physical world (p. 4-6). This “sense of the other” is presented today through one of maps’ most important features – borders. Though borders may be simply defined as lines that separate two geographic areas, understanding the larger meaning of borders can provide a better understanding of why these lines are drawn in the first place.

Regardless of its historical evolution, it is undeniable that mapping has evolved into a political function today where there are a handful of nations constantly disputing borders. For example, cartography can no longer simply be concerned with understanding physical terrain. Instead, it must be concerned with issues of land power, specifically, who will gain control of land and where borders will be placed. Berg and Oras (2000) claim that every state aims to demarcate its own boundaries to separate “ours” from “the others” (p. 601). The function that maps, and specifically geographic borders, serve rhetorically vary from country to country and from border to border – but with the common link that they *do* function rhetorically. A border that is easily permeable and not being disputed functions differently than a border that is under dispute or divides a warring nation from a peaceful one. Geographic borders have a meaning beyond their physical topography – a river, a mountain range or a line on a page. Instead, their meaning is often the product of multiple texts. These texts, which include cartography, discourse, land treaties and trade agreements, are rhetorical because of the way they shape an argument for a particular understanding of borders. The resulting effect gives borders significant meaning not

only within the fields of geography, but within anthropology, sociology, and - for the purposes of this research - rhetorical studies.

The border itself is rhetorical and influences the nature of space making. Humans have drawn and controlled borders, and not only the lands the borders designate, but also the border itself has a rhetorical space and voice. For example, Ono and Sloop (2002) argue:

Rhetoric *shifts* borders, changing what they mean publicly, influencing public policy, altering the ways borders affect people and circumscribing political responses to such legislation...rhetoric shapes understandings of how the border functions; taken further, because of its increasingly powerful role, rhetoric at times even determines where, and what, the border is (p. 5)

Borders are clearly influenced by rhetoric and altered depending on the surrounding factors. But just as rhetoric impacts and even defines borders, the border itself does not acquire a meaning and then maintain it. The *shifting* of borders is a continual process, and is not easily confined to a static interpretation.

### **Recent History of the U.S.-Mexico Border**

The nature of border disputes and problems vary from controversy over natural resource-rich land and the contesting of sacred space, to imperialism and the greed for widespread control. The conflict surrounding borders creates a perpetual struggle rhetorically to establish place, define identity, understand culture and formulate memory (Flores, 2003). Though the job of deciding international borders cannot be seen as the responsibility of one person or group, the question of who draws geographic borders is an important one to ask. Plenty of borders have been constructed over long periods of time, treaties and other agreements; yet, others are determined based ultimately on natural boundaries such as rivers or other prominent topography (Daley, 2000; Fox, 1999). It may be more beneficial to be aware of which nation along each border ultimately controls that border's discourse. This is because the ability to determine the

locus of power along a border can help establish who is benefitting from an international relationship. Additionally, the hegemony that is created and perpetuated across borders often oppresses one of the two countries. For example, the dominant discourse within the U.S.-Mexico immigration debate is that of the United States. More specifically, through the power of immigration regulation (to keep immigrants out), the U.S. ultimately controls the border (Ono & Sloop, 2002). The dominance of the U.S. narrative places the *diaspora* of Mexicans in the United States in the margins of society, and as a result, the Mexican narrative becomes the outlaw discourse. Studies of diasporas are common in postcolonial rhetorical studies, and while the term originally referred to the displacement and dispersion of Jews beyond Israel, a looser postcolonial definition is, “the voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homelands into new regions” (Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, 1998, p. 68). Therefore, the movement of Mexicans into the U.S. can be viewed as a diaspora. Faist (2000) argues that Mexicans living in the United States constitute a “transnational community” that has become a diaspora through their displacement and dispersal across the U.S.-Mexico border (p. 195). Mexicans were, and often are, displaced from their homelands as a result of economic pressures and forces of resource needs.

The border between the United States and Mexico is an increasingly common topic within policy-making and political debates. Presently, focus of the illegal immigration debate on immigrants from Mexico or other parts of Latin America has been at the forefront of U.S.-Mexico border issues. For example, despite actions taken to create a physical barrier between the U.S. and Mexico, citizen groups like the Minutemen have formed to enforce the prohibition of *illegal aliens* from entering into the U.S. (Holling & Dickinson, 2006). And while progress toward globalization – or the opening of international borders to trade and travel – is increasing,

people are still largely defined by where they are born. Agamben (2000) states, "...the destiny of a people can only be a state identity and the concept of people only makes sense within the concept of citizenship" (p. 67). Agamben's perception creates a dilemma for displaced Mexicans who immigrate across the border or whose existence straddles both sides of the borderlands. Judith Butler (2007) further describes this dilemma by suggesting that after a person is displaced from their homeland, they may find it difficult or even impossible to recreate those homeland ties in their new place. She explains that when someone is displaced, they are still in transit because there is not necessarily anywhere to go: "It may be within the borders of a given state but precisely not as a citizen; so, one is received...on the condition that one does not belong," and that the lack of belonging often makes them appear to the citizens as "illegitimate inhabitants" (Butler, 2007, p. 6, 31). This illustrates the fact that while people may understand their own cultural identity to be based on a variety of factors, they are largely viewed by others only in terms of their homeland location.

Grassroots citizen organizations like the Minutemen have emerged to protect the border from "illegal aliens" – a term itself laden with rhetorical purpose (Flores, 2003). However, the function of this particular border is deeply complicated. The controversy of illegal immigration in the U.S. results in subsequent issues in the areas of economics, education, crime and health care. In 1994, the Clinton Administration along with the Canadian and Mexican governments implemented the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, which served to open trade between the nations of North America. Before its signing in 1993, President Clinton stated, "NAFTA means jobs. American jobs, and good-paying American jobs...NAFTA will generate these jobs by fostering an export boom to Mexico; by tearing down tariff walls which have been lowered quite a bit, but are still higher than America's" (Clinton, 1993). The opening of the



border was supposed to curb illegal immigration from Mexico into the U.S. by providing increased trade, and thus, increased wealth to Mexico. Instead, Mexican factories faced “a significant surge in the demand for assets without a concomitant increase in their supply” which led to higher prices and eventually “a virtual disappearance of credit for small and medium-sized [Mexican] businesses and farms” (Cooney, 2001, pp. 56-57). As a result, many factories closed, farms failed, and Mexican workers found jobs at new factories just over the border into the United States (Uchitelle, 2007). Although NAFTA may have succeeded in creating U.S. jobs, it also eliminated many jobs in Mexico. The metaphorical opening of these borders was pitched as a winning situation for the strengthening of all countries involved, but the concomitant result was one of increased immigration of Mexicans into the United States. Subsidies provided to farmers in the United States created an international labor struggle, and as a result, farming in Mexico lost profitability. Many Mexicans moved to the United States to work physically demanding jobs, and many of them accepted lower wages for those jobs than Americans legally could. This created a struggle between the services provided by underpaid Mexican laborers and the problems with their illegal residence in the United States.

The U.S. did not formally regulate immigration from Mexico until 1929 when the Immigration Act of 1924 was passed. This act was not written to end immigration into the U.S., but rather to limit immigration to a quota of 150,000 total people per year (Ngai, 1999). Since the passage of this act, ambushes and deportation of groups of illegal immigrants have been occurring throughout the U.S. – and these ambushes have not been limited to areas near the border (Flores, 2003). Recent mass deportations have aggravated the debate about who should be allowed to cross borders and create homes on either side. In May of 2008, nearly 400 workers were detained from a Postville, Iowa meatpacking plant after suspicions were raised that many

workers were illegal immigrants. Furthermore, in August of 2008, 350 workers were removed in a raid of a Laurel, Mississippi factory on grounds of similar suspicions (Nossiter, 2008). This removal of entire groups of immigrants shakes the communities that they inhabit in the United States, and effectively re-displaces a diaspora.

### **Rhetoric, Culture and Borders**

Holling and Dickinson (2006) describe how the dispersion of Mexicans into the United States becomes a diaspora because people are compelled to “migrate, or attempt to migrate, across the space of the border” (p. 12). This migration often occurs due to forces of political oppression or economic struggle. This act of crossing borders is significant because of the differentiation and division of nations the border represents. In his book *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Kenneth Burke (1969) describes the process of identification between people. For Burke, the concept of *consubstantiation* refers to the idea that when people identify with a particular group of people, they must, at the same time, be divided from another group. Burke explains, “Identification is compensatory to division. If men were not apart from one another, there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity. If men were wholly and truly of one substance, absolute communication would be of man’s very essence” (p. 22). The idea that identification with one group of people inexorably causes them to be divided against another lends insight into the struggle of the diasporic populations moving across the borderlands. People crossing the border may be unable to identify with either the country they are leaving or the country they are settling in, because to identify with one may divide them from the other. This dilemma speaks to the way borders disrupt the human need to identify.

Although it has been argued that geographic borders have an impact on nations’ rhetoric (Ono & Sloop, 2002; Flores, 2003) less has been said about how the border itself might function

rhetorically. Hart (2005) describes three features that make something rhetorical, “(1) delineations of the good, (2) resonance for a particular audience, and (3) clear or clearly implied policy recommendations” (p. 12). Although geographic borders may appear too vast and the messages surrounding them may appear conflicting, it is undeniable that borders speak to each of Hart’s features. Some definitions of rhetoric may not leave space for something as vast as a geographical border, but Hart’s definition, and consequently the definition this project subscribes to, does. The U.S.-Mexico border is continually confronted with debates over what is right and what policies should be enacted. Additionally, it is undeniable that the border strongly resonates with meaning for several populations – including those who wish to cross the border and those who wish to build a fence to prevent immigration. Thus, this project argues that geographic borders themselves are inherently rhetorical. The people, policies and narratives existing at geographic borders collide in a way that is problematic for people in and around the border, but nevertheless, offer rhetoric that necessitates analysis. Borders are important because of the way they lead people to identify as existing on one side of an emblematic line. This identification creates a hierarchy where people are either part of the dominant discourse or part of the outlaw discourse.

One of the first problems to arise when studying borderlands is the tendency for scholars to assume the geographical border as equivalent to a line between cultures. This results in perceptions of “U.S. culture” and “Mexican culture,” which diminish the significance and deny the complications of the borderlands. The border itself is a rhetorical space and a cultural milieu that deserves unique attention. Gupta and Ferguson (1997) claim that attempts to map cultures are problematic because many people, especially those crossing back and forth repeatedly or

immigrating across borders, face a disjunction of place and culture. Just as rhetoric shapes borders, the borders often shape rhetoric.

Assumptions of a natural association between people, cultures and places are “class-based and class-performed,” because despite the interconnectedness of our physical world, difference is still produced and maintained by a dominant population (Gupta & Ferguson, 1997). The material effects of culture within the borderlands speak to the fluidity of identity in borderlands; yet, the borders continue to produce and maintain real material differences. Borders were not drawn and enforced to connect us to one another or to make cultures appear to be interconnected. Instead, borders, whether *intended* to serve this function or not, communicate more to us about our difference than our connections. Borders are not drawn to foster inclusivity among nations – they are drawn to provide an understanding of *self* and *other*. Understanding how cultures meet and cross paths at the border will allow us to break away from the assumption that borders are just arbitrary lines separating both cultures and countries. Westernized humans label cultures as belonging to particular spaces inside boundaries, but it is problematic to deny that cultures exist across and between borders (Nygren, 1993). Instead, it should be understood that cultures often *transcend* the lines of geographical borders (Grieg 2002). Because cultures are not necessarily limited to specific geographic regions, the borderland exists as a confluence of societies into a perpetually shifting – yet still unique culture. The borderland culture is a product of the variety of different homelands in which people have their roots, as well as the reasons for moving toward the U.S. The borderlands are therefore a transitory space with a multitude of cultural perspectives uniting to create the unique borderland culture. Furthermore, it is important to recognize that the world divides cultures through borders in a way that denies the existence of the unique culture that exists between the borderlands. While there are certainly cultures that

exist across several international borders (e.g. Mediterranean culture) and situations where several cultures exist within one border (e.g. the vast amount of cultures within the United States) it is still necessary to recognize the transient and idiosyncratic nature of *borderland* culture.

Borders represent the division of people into locations and societies, but nevertheless are only *representations* of these divisions. As evidenced by immigration policy, people on both sides of borders often understand these *representations* the same way they understand physical boundaries. Thus, the border itself is not a line that simply demarcates cultures and land, it is a metaphor made literal (Prelli, 2006). Metaphors are literalized when we begin to view the metaphor not only as an option, but also as an absolute and tangible boundary. The act of naming the Rio Grande as the official line of the U.S.-Mexico border did not yet literalize the metaphor. The literalization occurred when the border became central to the understanding of trading goods and when cultures became viewed as on either one side of this line or the other. Gupta and Ferguson (1997) argue that social scientists can no longer dismiss borders as insignificant, marginal areas of land between stable places – largely because the notion of borderland is actually a more adequate conceptualization of the “normal” locale of the postmodern subject. While postmodernity has been represented by a number of varying and possibly even contradictory definitions, it is still recognizable as the alternative to modernity’s standards of structure and efficiency – much as the borderlands can be seen as an alternative to nation-states where laws and identities are stable. Crotty (1998) purports, “Instead of espousing clarity, certitude, wholeness and continuity, postmodernism commits itself to ambiguity, relativity, fragmentation, particularity and discontinuity” (p. 185). Crotty’s definition clearly aligns with the way borderlands are viewed throughout this research. Furthermore, studying borderlands

allows us to see beyond the perception of border as line, to the concept of border as *place*. Along with this renewed sense of understanding of borderlands, Gupta and Ferguson call for research focusing on the U.S.-Mexico border because of the way concepts of “culture” and “difference” have been appropriated into the repressive ideological apparatus of U.S. immigration law.

As noted by Gupta and Ferguson, maps and borders are inherently problematic. Though maps appear as objective images, they are laden with contradictions and hidden agendas (Harley, 1998). It is necessary to deconstruct the concept of maps and the physical lines that represent “rhetorical bordering.” Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the rhetorical dimensions of border discourse. More specifically, it seeks to understand the rhetorical forces that are shaping the U.S.-Mexico border, and the way this particular border shapes not only the people living at the border, but also those living deep within the countries on either side of it. The U.S.-Mexico border communicates difference, problematizes concepts of *space* and *place*, and serves to constitute identity and cultural memory.

Many of the disputes, discussions and claims surrounding geographical borders are driven by conceptions of belongingness. This inherent human need to belong is complicated by the transient nature of borderlands and borderland inhabitants. The idea of *space* often conjures thoughts of area, geometry and emptiness. Discussions of place are a bit different – at times viewed at the opposite side of a space/place dialectic and at others considered interchangeable with space. Though the understanding of place is still developing within the rhetorical discipline as well as the fields of Anthropology, Sociology and Philosophy, common themes in discursive space and place are developing. de Certeau (1984) differentiates place as, “the order in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence” (p. 117). This idea of place implies belonging and stability. Space is the effect of the order created by place – thus, for de

Certeau (1984) “space is a practiced place” (p. 117). Or, as Wood (2003) interprets de Certeau, “space is agency and place is power,” meaning that space is a capacity in which someone can act, but place is a location where this act can actually occur (p. 325-326). Concomitantly, Mitchell (2002) explains how a place is filled with space, but a space does not necessarily contain a place. Therefore, space exists whether it is desired or not, and place must be created or claimed in order to serve its ultimate function. The experience had in a place, and the way a place is remembered is a product of the visual and discursive rhetoric that surrounds it – which is suggested by this paper to be presented to the public through the media’s portrayal of it.

The rhetoric that surrounds this border is *visual* in the sense of how the borderland has been mapped geographically, how it has been photographed and how the implementation of the U.S.-Mexico boundary (fence) has altered both the landscape and meaning of the border. Furthermore, the rhetoric that shapes this border is *discursive*. The way immigration laws, trade agreements and land disputes have been talked about by the government and the media have done more to shape public knowledge and understanding of the border than the river or fence themselves. The pervasiveness of border discourse is accessible and multi-faceted. In the past two years nearly every popular U.S. news magazine and web site has featured photos and maps accompanying articles about issues surrounding the U.S.-Mexico border. For example, the April 1, 2008 Christian Science Monitor, the June 30, 2008 Time magazine, the May 2007 National Geographic, and MSNBC.com of August 24, 2008 all feature photo essays depicting the border. While these images may not be able to provide a full visual representation of the border, their placement enables them to create the dominant visual representation of the border for United States citizens unable to view the border in person. Given this understanding of borderlands and the rhetorical dimensions of border discourse, this project seeks to answer the question:

*How do the visual and discursive elements that constitute the U.S.-Mexico border function rhetorically to communicate difference and establish place?*

In order to address each part of this question, I will first review literature addressing how rhetoric seeks to establish and maintain a sense of place, and how diaspora and postcolonial rhetorical studies have worked together to provide an understanding of the rhetorical nature of borders. The ways that difference is communicated and place is established rely heavily on how the people engaging in these acts view their own identity and cultural memory in terms of this particular location. People define themselves in a variety of ways, but often these definitions are reliant on the place from which they shape their identities and cultural memory understandings. For this research, the U.S.-Mexico boundary is represented by a combination of images and narratives that illustrate understandings of place occurring at the borderlands. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) provide a methodology that serves as a framework for analyzing the border's visual representations. This social semiotic perspective is supplemented with a theory of visual rhetoric as it pertains to identification and cultural memory (Dickenson, 1997). The combination of these methodologies provides ways to analyze the different types of rhetoric that shape perceptions of the border.

### **Preview of Chapters**

Chapter two reviews the academic literature that provides a background to the analysis of place, cultural memory and visual rhetoric. Specifically, this chapter addresses how previous scholarship has defined *place*, and the way conceptions of place often contribute to identification within – or apart from – specific cultures. The next section reviews a brief history of literature regarding postcolonialism and research of diasporic populations. The third section of the literature review further addresses the way place contributes to identification, and additionally



provides a history and review of cultural memory scholarship. Finally, chapter two will review previous scholarship and current research trends in visual rhetoric.

Chapter three describes and justifies the artifacts and methodology that were used in this research. These artifacts consist of U.S. and Mexican maps of the U.S.-Mexico border, a series of photographs depicting the border, and a series of public radio news and narratives discussing various locations along the border. Furthermore, this chapter lays out the methodology that was used to analyze these artifacts. Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) theory of reading images is the first method explored. The second method that addressed is Dickinson's (1997) analysis of cultural memory places.

Chapter four provides the analysis of the visual artifacts. First, Kress and van Leeuwen's method for reading the grammar of images is used to analyze a photograph essay depicting images of the border. Next, the method is used to read the messages of both an American-made map of the border and a Mexican-made map of the border. In Chapter five Dickinson's method for exploring places of cultural memory is used to analyze a series of radio essays that contain interviews with and narratives from people inhabiting the borderlands.

Chapter six responds to the research question and discusses political and methodological implications. Lastly, the chapter addresses the conclusions arising from this scholarship.

## CHAPTER 2 - Literature Review

### A Rhetoric of Place

Before *place* could be considered within rhetorical studies, space and place had to be recognized as more than just inconsequential area and physical realities. Lefebvre (1974/1991) contends that even great philosophical thinking had failed to recognize the need for a science of space, and particularly a science of social space. He states, “(Social) space is not a thing among other things, nor a product among other products: rather, it subsumes things produced, and encompasses their interrelationships in their coexistence and simultaneity – their (relative) order and/or (relative) disorder” (p. 73). Lefebvre’s definition of space was based on a rereading of Marx’s social-spatial dialectic that he re-labeled *spatiality* (Soja, 1980). Their discussion of space served as an impetus for the analysis of place. Merrifield (1993) notes that Lefebvre’s conceptualization of spatiality alerts us to the fact that material landscapes are produced; that our social practices instill *place* and *space* with meanings that are not inherently or absolutely opposites. Stories provided by both images and verbal narratives illustrate the changing relationship between place and space, and allow each to constantly transform from one to the other (de Certeau, 1984). This indicates that place and space are not interchangeable, but interdependent and influenced by one another.

Thus, the concepts of space and place suggest that places and spaces function within and around one another. Additionally, place and space are representative of and undeniably important in the perception of our own memories and identities (Wright, 2005; Said, 2002). Wright (2005) refers to the interconnectedness of space and place as “s/p[l]ace,” which speaks to the often fluid

nature of both space and place, and the tendency for some to consider the terms to be interchangeable. However, the majority of current research – while noting their similarities – continues to distinguish between space and place. Furthermore, researching place in regional cultures can provide a better understanding of what motivates groups to form attachments to particular places. Bird (2003) explains how narratives provide insight into how cultures construct their concepts of place and create their identities. As Dixon (2000) states, “...questions of ‘who we are’ are often intimately related to questions of ‘where we are’” (p. 27). The places where people are from or have spent significant time often plays a large role in how these people identify themselves within larger societies and cultures – and the narratives surrounding these places become identifying narratives for people with connection to those places.

Place is commonly confused with community, however, community imposes a level of morality upon its inhabitants, but place exists apart from moral standards (Agnew, 1989). It would benefit social science for place to be extended into amorphous definitions (like community or location). While physical place may remain static, its meaning produced through cultural memory will not. Most social science research embraces the need for a concept of place, but there is some discrepancy among the definitions provided by the variety of social scientific disciplines. Cheng, Kruger, and Daniels (2003) view place as a means to constitute human action and help people find meaning and order in their lives.

Place, as it pertains to natural resources is often rife with politics and dispute (Cheng et al., 2003). The connections people form to their environment and the natural world have a significant impact on how they connect to other people and how they view their role in the environment. Sociologists, draw a line between concepts of space and place and take a more

narrow definition of place as pertaining to how “ordinary people” identify, name and represent the area that could be negotiated as space (Gieryn, 2000, p. 465; Feld & Basso, 1996).

Anthropologically, studies of place have taken on a variety of meanings. Agnew and Duncan (1989) argue that social scientific definitions of place have tended to stress their differences instead of exploring their similarities:

Economists and economic geographers have emphasized *location*...the spatial distribution of social and economic activities resulting from between-place factor cost and market price differentials. Secondly, microsociologists and humanistic geographers have concerned themselves with *locale*, the settings for everyday routine social interactions provided in a place. Thirdly, anthropologists and cultural geographers have shown interest in the *sense of place* or identification with a place engendered by living in it. Rarely have the three aspects been seen as complementary *dimensions* of place (p. 2)

This discrepancy in definitions across fields of study, and even across specific disciplines, lead to disconnection in conceptions of place. While *place* may take on the same broad meaning across disciplines, the inconsistency allows the term to be largely open to interpretation. Postmodern (and poststructural) conceptions have engaged in the classification of place as location, locale and identification. These conceptions arise from a more critical perspective that addresses place within, and resulting from the influence of, cultures and cultural units.

Inherent in these perceptions of place is the role power plays in individual understandings of place and ability to address place (Agnew & Duncan, 1989; Gupta & Furguson, 1997).

Hellstrom (2003) explains that place is often determined by those in power and that those without power often lack and desire place. The concept of nationality is frequently manipulated so that not all parts of a population are able to connect with the national character. Consequently, some groups remain oppressed and others remain in power due to their ability to control place. Furthermore, geographical borders are fundamental factors in the understanding of space, and “The [top down] drawing of borders is an intrinsic part of the construction of collective

identities” (Hellstrom, 2003, p. 125). Because people elected or born into positions of power are able to dominate the place discussion, they also largely maintain the right to determine the location of borders and their region’s construction of place.

Most of the scholarship produced by the rhetorical discipline is concerned with place as it pertains to identity and cultural memory. For example, Dickinson (1997) explores place as a location where people experience nostalgia and establish their identities, and similarly, Blair and Michel (2000) establish places as sites of rhetorical performances. Further literature utilizing place as a site for memory and identity will be discussed in this paper’s review of cultural memory scholarship. However it is still necessary to explore the ways place is generally defined from a rhetorical perspective. Rice (2008) bases his definition of place on Aristotle’s concept of invention, and explains that according for Aristotle, the path toward understanding the vast amount of information available “can only follow one topic (place) at a time because only in one place ideas are to be found” (Rice, 2008, p. 202). For Aristotle, place represents “the perspective from which one searches” and that in order to navigate information, a rhetor moves through places (Rice, 2008, p. 203). Wood (2003) offers a definition of place that is drawn from de Certeau. This article refers to place as a location that contributes to the formation of identities through “the conversion of multiple spaces” (Wood, 2003, p. 324). As it is most commonly used in the rhetorical discipline, place is a special type of space, and often is referred to in terms of its ties to identity construction and performance. Although Rice perceives space to have a role in the process of invention and navigation of information, Dickinson and Wood understand place as having an inherent role in identity construction through memories and attachments.

Nearly all international borderlands – disputed, friendly or resource desolate – consist of an area where *place* is disputed or misunderstood. Said (2002) defines geography as, “...a

socially constructed and maintained sense of place,” and that people look to a refashioned memory to provide their identity, narrative and understanding of their place (pp. 245-246). People can be liberated or excluded based on the place they consider home. People who cross borders, the U.S.-Mexico border in particular, face a shifting sense of place and are often marginalized due to the way they are forced to straddle the cultures on either side of the border (Flores 1996, 2003; Hariman 1986). Flores (1996) discusses how Chicana feminists living in the U.S. are confronted with tensions between their Mexican and Anglo identities as well as tensions between patriarchy and feminism. These tensions between identities can result in an existence without a space. So while space can be created with discourse, place is more of a region of physical belonging. When divergent parties exist, place will be problematic. When place involves a division of cultures, it will often be misunderstood and likely disputed. However, place is a desirable state for all parties. People living in the borderlands are disadvantaged because they are largely denied place from the countries on either side of the border. Therefore, any place that does exist at the border is constantly being manipulated by the policies occurring in the nations surrounding the border.

### **Postcolonialism and Finding Place as a Diasporic Population**

Because of the transient and inconsistent nature of borderlands, many of the people living on or near them are perpetually displaced. Understanding this displacement (diaspora) further acknowledges the importance of place, and shows how the establishment of cultural memory is problematic for borderland inhabitants. In order to establish and restore their collective memory and sense of place, diasporas are forced to redefine themselves in terms of their border identities. This often results in conflicting connections to homelands and new cultures. Drzewiecka (2002)

contests that diaspora is an enduring and often-permanent situation for populations moved across borders. Diasporic populations are left with a part of themselves in both their home country and their new country and are stuck in the margins of both places (Flores, 1996; Drzewiecka, 2002). While not all populations that inhabit borderlands would be considered diasporic, the majority of the Chicana/o populations living throughout America can easily be viewed as displaced. Rinderle (2005) claims that Mexican populations living in America are a diaspora because:

they have experienced the following: (a) a history of physical displacement, (b) cultural dislocation and hybridity, (c) a yearning for homeland, (d) structural displacement and a complex structural relationship between nation-state and diaspora, (e) alienation from the hostland, and, (f) a collective identity defined by the relationship between homeland and hostland (p. 295)

This interpretation of diaspora allows for recognition of the negative connotations and identity complications the word holds for populations that are displaced from their homeland. For the purposes of this research it is important to establish how Mexicans living in the United States have often been displaced. This will allow for analysis of this population's rhetoric to be performed with regards to the contextual difference between diasporic populations and groups who cross the border for other reasons (e.g. for vacations, medical tourism or other consumerist needs).

The structural and cultural nature of diaspora largely has been explored through postcolonial analysis. Hall (1990) explains in one of the earliest pieces to approach postcolonial analysis within cultural studies that the struggles of the diasporas to rediscover their identities are the struggles that shape our postcolonial worlds. While postcolonial studies have implications for rhetorical studies, the nature of the perspective is inherently interdisciplinary due to the nature of its greater cause of, "theorizing the problematics of colonization, decolonization" (Shome & Hedge, 2002, p. 250). Postcolonial researchers are responsible for examining the power and

identity formations of colonialism – in addition to its geographical contexts – in a critical and activist manner (Schwarz, 2000). The communication structure that surrounds diasporic groups is multilayered and political. Viewing diaspora through a communication-centered, postcolonial lens can reveal the complexities of these diasporic (often identity-focused) politics (Drzewiecka & Halualani, 2002).

Hasian (2002) purported that postcolonial analysis had not done enough to sort through collective memories of the diasporas. Furthermore, previous studies were not explicit enough with discussions of diasporas' forced reinterpretation of national symbols and employment of exclusionary discourses. The more activist postcolonial critics have ventured toward helping diasporas find their centers, and remove themselves from the margins of the “chaordic” (chaotic ordered) societies they are constantly between (Werbner, 2002). One of the first writers to provide a way for diasporic populations to remove themselves from the margins was Gloria Anzaldua. She presented a *mestiza* consciousness of the borderlands, characterized by restlessness and a state of perpetual transition, in which the displaced person creates a new consciousness to change the perception of reality through the creation of a new mythos (Anzaldua, 1987). Flores (1996) argues that through creative works like Anzaldua's, displaced women specifically Chicana feminists, provide a way to negotiate the tensions of all their identities, create a discursive space and ultimately establish a home within their cultures. They are able to create this space and home through the employment of a rhetoric of difference which requires rejection of the mainstream discourse and establishment of self as something different than the perceived stereotype. The narratives that can serve to empower postcolonial diasporas must come from within the group because, while advocates can serve to create awareness of the



diasporic struggle, they cannot effectively or honestly speak for ‘the postcolonial’ (Diaz, 2003, pp. 10-11).

The Mexican diaspora in the United States is largely an issue because one country (the United States) has preponderant control over who may cross its borders, and utilizes rhetoric to perpetually “other” those who cross into their territory, regardless of their diasporic status. Rinderle (2005) responds to this power conflict by arguing, “The struggle over labels that the Mexican diaspora faces in the United States appears to be an exercise in othering by the dominant strata and the subaltern subjects themselves” (p. 308). Thus, the effect of NAFTA and the U.S.-Mexico fence provides a perpetual and increasing amount of othering and continuous displacement of Mexican immigrants. Furthermore, the analysis provided in chapters 4 and 5 will address the argument that the people living in and emigrating across the borderlands are not only victims of “rhetorical bordering” left without a sense of place, but are also forced to reconfigure their own, limited understanding of their cultural memory.

### **Cultural Memory and Identity**

People who inhabit borderlands are often faced with instability in cultural identity and cultural memory. It may be challenging to specify the role cultural memory plays in the rhetorical construction of the U.S.-Mexico border, so before this can be attempted it is important to understand how cultural memory has existed within rhetorical studies. In Kelshaw and St. John’s (2007) analysis of the use of *memory* in the communication discipline, they found that in recent years the term has been most commonly used in studies they label “public/cultural, discursive,” but that use of memory in this area of study did not become prominent until the 1990s (pp. 63-64). Kelshaw and St. John distinguish between media-focused and non-media-

focused cultural memory – with the non-media-focused type of cultural memory concentrated on various public spaces with a concern, “for the ways in which cultural premises are maintained through shared connotative symbols” (p. 62). The term memory may be used in other areas of rhetorical scholarship, however, *cultural memory* scholarship is distinct because it is generally critical – focusing on how cultural identification is performed within these public spaces and shared with others in the same memory place.

While Kelshaw and St. John (2007) suggest that cultural memory studies began in the 1970s and erupted in the 1990s, others trace the origins of this area of memory scholarship – particularly the connection of memory to *place* – back to Ancient Greece. Memory has its place as one of Aristotle’s canons of rhetoric, and Ancient Greek rhetoricians commonly memorized orations by making each room of a building into a space containing information from distinct parts of orations (Yates, 1966). This process created a “specialized [architectural] theory of memory” (Dickinson, 1996, p. 2). Dickinson (1997) suggests that these “memory places” have influenced contemporary rhetorical studies because they have allowed rhetors to connect memory, space and identity. It was suggested that identities are heavily reliant on one’s memory – thus, *cultural* memory effectively shapes one’s cultural identity.

Taylor (2003) argues that performance of culture – through plays, stories, and protests – allows for both the preservation of culture and cultural identification. These acts are *repertoire*, and are acts of “embodied memory” that create agency for the performer and a *real* way for audiences to comprehend cultural memory (Taylor, p. 20). In the repertoire, cultural identity is literally performed which allows for connection to the cultural memory for both the performer and audience. Cultural memory is further established and performed through the construction of museums and other places of cultural display. Blair and Michel (2000) and Atwater and Herndon

(2003) produced seminal articles for cultural memory studies in the field of rhetoric through their research of the National Civil Rights Memorial and MuseumAfrica. Blair and Michel suggest that the National Civil Rights Museum provided an “ensemble of interrelated performances” of cultural memory that shifted the understanding of the Civil Rights Movement by creating “commemorative rhetoric” (p. 32, 40). Atwater and Herndon (2003) claimed that cultural memory lied at the intersection of official culture (culture communicated by the nation-state to enforce unity) and vernacular culture (material, local culture that supports change, rights and secularity). This public, cultural memory “is communicated by and on behalf of the nation-state and seeks through its sponsorship to retain loyalty, to keep itself perpetual, and to stress the virtue of unity” (Atwater & Herndon, 2003, p. 17). Museums and memorials are epitomes of cultural memory sites, and though they may oversimplify understanding of particular cultures, they allow memory to be maintained and presented in a more digestible way.

While much of the cultural memory literature produced recently focuses on specific buildings, memorials, or units of land, other significant research finds memory places in lands or entire geographic regions. Dickinson’s (1997) analysis of cultural memory in Pasadena, California explored the nostalgia present in certain landscapes and the way these nostalgic memories are impacted by consumerism. Dickinson contends:

As rhetorical places or *loci*, landscapes draw together a wide range of cultural and historical resources...Connecting memory with consumption, places like Old Pasadena clarify the complex connection between the practices of consumption and the enactment of selves, for together memory and consumer culture provide the possibilities for creating meaningful identities...These places call on complex, intertextual relationships to trigger the resources of memory, foster consumption and provide places for the bodily enactment of identity. Thus, memories and memory places are not just comforting responses to the fragmentation of postmodern consumer culture, they are an integral part of contemporary performances of identity (pp. 4-5)

For Dickinson, places of nostalgia are more than places where people have happy memories of the past – they are places where individuals are forced to evaluate their individual identities and position within that particular culture. Said (2002) further notes that memory intersects with place and identification in particular landscapes to help individuals understand how groups of people can be either excluded or liberated as a result of their locations and what those locations mean to them. A geographic location does not necessarily become a memory place unless an individual has nostalgia for that location and that location plays a role in that individual's construction of their identity.

### **Studies in Visual Rhetoric and Culture**

Though different approaches can be taken to understand cultural memory at the borderlands, an approach focused on visual rhetoric offers insight into the way places are represented through both images and maps. Hariman and Lucaites (2003) further suggest that understanding of public culture “depends on visual rhetorics to maintain...its fundamental constitution of public identity” (p. 36). While the geographic region into which a person is born has a significant influence on their views of the world around them, understanding the location of that region on a map provides a strong sense of identity within the world (Dijkink, 1996). Maps provide a form of visual rhetoric that helps people to establish and understand their identity in relation to people from other geographic regions.

Additionally, understanding the interdisciplinarity of the visual is necessary when tracing the roots of studies in visual rhetoric. Mitchell (1995) contends that visual culture is a field influenced by studies of visual images, art history, film, culture, sociology and rhetoric because, “it names a problematic rather than a well-defined theoretical object” (p. 542). Attempting to

define a place visually results in a range of options for what *visual culture* or *visual rhetoric* might actually refer to, and there is not necessarily consensus on that meaning between those studying it (Hill & Helmers, 2004; Olson, 2007). Photographs may be one of the most prominent examples of visual representation, but visual rhetoric should not be limited to photographs.

Current studies of visual rhetoric have largely been accredited to have their foundation in Roland Barthes' and Charles Sanders Pierce's writings on semiotics (Barnhurst & Rodriguez, 2004; Hill & Helmers, 2004). Barthes argued that it was necessary to study signs, symbols and other nonlinguistic forms of communication because of the impact visual images and objects have on understandings of reality (Barthes, 1967/1964). Though many signs and symbols either involve language or exist because of language, elements of the visual are universally important to understandings of space and nonlinguistic communication. Just like the written or spoken word, visual images – photographs in particular – speak to their audiences and require interpretation. Barthes (1977) explains that photographs have a “language” that is similar to spoken or written language but are different in the sense that verbal language “is experienced as a sign whereas the photographic ‘copy’ is taken as the pure and simple denotation of reality” (p. 197). The interpretation of visual language is dependent on the viewer's knowledge of the conditions under which the image was produced.

While Barthes helped to lay a foundation for semiotic theories, and Mitchell offered reasons for acceptance of visual culture studies across academic disciplines, attention to the visual did not progress in rhetorical studies until later. Sonja Foss (1982) was one of the first in this discipline to argue for the inclusion of the visual as a form of rhetoric. Foss (1982) contended:

We may not be accustomed to thinking about art or visual elements as rhetoric, and they are not often studied as such. But a definition of art easily becomes extremely rhetorical

if it is viewed as the production or arrangement of sounds, colors, forms, movements, and other elements in a manner that affects or evokes a response. The process by which a visual phenomenon creates a response is similar to that of verbal discourse (p. 55)

For Foss, it seemed natural to consider art and other images as having a rhetorical function. Both Foss and Olson (2007) claim that when Kenneth Burke defined rhetoric as symbolic action in his 1950 book *A Rhetoric of Motives*, a door was opened for the study of visual symbols in addition to the verbal symbols that formed the basis of the rhetorical discipline.

In his review of visual rhetoric scholarship since 1950, Olson (2007) notes that more than two thirds of this scholarship was published after 2000. Different methods have been provided to analyze visual rhetoric. Art, magazine and newspaper advertisements, in addition to other printed images, were some of the first to be considered within rhetorical studies-focused publications. Olson (1983) examined Norman Rockwell paintings, illustrations and posters used by Franklin D. Roosevelt to earn support for the war. Olson's reading of these texts was largely dependent on the context of the political setting in which they were created and used. He concluded that icons could motivate political action in a different way than speech acts, but that they were still significant forms of persuasion. This method of reading images as a text has continued with notable analysis by Hariman and Lucaites (2002; 2007) which identified the way an iconic photograph can "acquire public appeal and normative power as it provides embodied depictions of important abstractions operative within the public discourse of an historical period" (Hariman & Lucaites, 2007, p. 58). This type of visual rhetoric scholarship has been largely focused on art and photographs aimed at some type of political persuasion – generally discussing the way these visual elements are interpreted by the public and the way the public responds.

A more recent trend in studies of visual rhetoric involves analysis of places and events – memorials, cities, protests, museums and artifacts. Foss (1986) engaged in some of the first

visual rhetoric research regarding the aesthetics of a place in her study of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. In an approach similar to this research, Blair and Michel's (2000) analysis of the Civil Rights Memorial explores the way the visual experience, along with the linguistic messages of a memorial place, provide a rhetorical performance that essentially recreates – but at the same time – rewrites the historical experience for a new audience. This type of scholarship is important because it combines the visual elements of a place with the verbal messages present at the place and inherent in the context of the experience in a way that acknowledges the propensity of a multitude of rhetorics to contribute to the public's consciousness.

The visual turn in rhetorical studies has opened space for research beyond oratory or written communication. While this has greatly broadened the scope of what can be considered rhetoric (or rather, rhetoric worthy of analysis), some continue to call for caution in analysis of visual rhetoric. Jay (2002) argues that researchers are often “over-confident” in their perceptions of what an image means and that they mistakenly perceive photographs as objective depictions of reality. Additionally, Barnhurst and Rodriguez (2004) echo this concern by raising the question of “whether images are a reflection or a construction” (p. 617). The challenge to research of international borderlands is to find representations of this place that depict this vast and constantly changing location, and to interpret these visual representations in a way that does not assume objectivity or contrivance on behalf of the person who created the image.

## **Conclusion**

The U.S.-Mexico border is a place that warrants further academic research because of its current impact on relationships between the two countries, and the way that it influences the identities of those crossing it, or living on or near it. Plenty of previous scholarship has addressed

the way policy both shapes and is shaped by the border. Yet, little has been done to establish how the border shapes cultural identity and acts as a cultural memory place. This research will address this need. Additionally, Daniels and Crossgrove (1993) propose that the best understanding of a place is through analysis of both the words and images surrounding the place. They claim that limiting analysis to only written metaphors prohibits us from understanding the entire landscape. Therefore, maps and images serve to represent the border in both capacities.



## **CHAPTER 3 - Method**

### **Visual and Discursive Texts**

In order to respond to the research question of how the U.S.-Mexico border functions rhetorically, it is important to understand how this particular border works to communicate difference and in what ways it serves to establish place. The border technically spans more than 1,900 miles, and the reaches of the areas of unique borderland culture expand even farther (Suau, 2008). Thus, while it may be apposite to suggest the U.S.-Mexico borderland functions rhetorically, it is more difficult to understand and explain how the borderland communicates to the people outside of it. Consequently, the methodology required to explore the rhetorical function of the U.S.-Mexico borderlands must be able to represent the interests of both the discursive (linguistic) and visual elements that shape the border and provide its rhetorical function. The visual images of photographs and maps speak to the linguistic elements through captions and explanations. The first visual text is a compilation of 16 photos printed in National Geographic in May 2007.<sup>1</sup> Two different maps will provide the second visual texts – one American map of the border and one of Mexican map of the border. Additionally, a five part public radio series about the U.S.-Mexico border will be used to enhance the visual and linguistic analysis of the borderland.

Maps and photographs also represent the visual rhetorical elements of the borderlands.

Photographs produce visceral reactions and can promote better, but possibly a larger, less

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<sup>1</sup> The photographs have not been included as appendices with this project because the images appear in a Flash photo compilation at <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2007/05/us-mexican-border/cook-jenshel-photography>, and are unable to be saved as individual files. Additionally, the images are copyrighted.

cohesive variety of understandings. Cloud (2004) states, “Images construct paradigmatic oppositions in order to win the identification and disidentification of audiences” (p. 290). Furthermore, photographs can be considered metonymy because they provide simple, possibly too simplistic representations of complex realities. Photographs can be greatly beneficial because of the illusion they create that whatever is in the frame of the image is real. However, photographs are often facile - they function metonymically by appearing as an accurate substitution for what they are supposed to represent. For example, viewing photographs of a structure such as the White House may arouse the belief that the photograph accurately substitutes for the physical White House – even if much of the structure is missing from the frame. Maps, while clearly functional, are also rhetorical in the sense that certain features can be highlighted and scaled in a way to subtly persuade audiences. Prelli (2006) states, “Much of a map’s persuasiveness depends on how visual elements (e.g., placement, shape, hue, size) are combined to induce a partial perspective in which some features and interrelationships come into view, while others are minimized, if not concealed” (p. 96). Harley (1989) states that viewers of maps have no difficulty seeing the map as hard, factual data that is free from human error. By analyzing maps of the same region drawn in more than one country, any human error or attempts at cartographic persuasion should be made obvious.

The visual images subject to analysis will include both maps and photographs. Two maps will be analyzed including one provided by the National Geographic map website, which can be found at: < <http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/map/atlas/north-america-geopolitical.html>>. This particular map is labeled as the North America Geopolitical map, and it focuses on the entire continent of North America. This map was deemed appropriate for this study because of its accessibility, and the ease with which it can be read. The Mexican map used for this analysis is

the one available on the Official website of the government of Mexico:

<[http://www.gob.mx/wb/egobierno/egob\\_Mexico\\_\\_Political\\_Map](http://www.gob.mx/wb/egobierno/egob_Mexico__Political_Map)>. It was chosen because it has a similar label to the National Geographic map – it is listed as a political map of Mexico. It focuses primarily on Mexico, but still prominently displays the border and even land that extends into the United States.

The photographs that will be analyzed are a series of border images taken by Diane Cook and Len Jenshell for publication in National Geographic Magazine (2007). The 16-page photo essay contains pictures of border towns, desert land and the fence spanning from the westernmost point to the easternmost point of the border. Only two of the photographs capture an image of people. The photo essay is titled, *Our walls, ourselves: Fences may make good neighbors, but the barriers dividing the U.S. and Mexico are proving much more complicated*. It is available at: <<http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/2007/05/us-mexican-border/cook-jenshel-photography>>. Though photo essays focusing on specific aspects of the border can be found in a variety of places, this one was chosen because of the way that it represented many different issues facing the border. For example, one photo depicts a portion of the fence built by the Minutemen organization, one image shows how close city development has pushed toward the border on the Mexico side while remaining far from the border on the U.S. side, and yet another shows a place where border control agents have placed a baseball backstop to protect themselves from the rocks that used to be thrown over that part of the border by people attempting to cross the border. While the fence appears in all but two of the 16 photographs, the images do not depict one static image of the border. The way the fence is shown as both pristine in one place and debilitated in another speaks to the inherent inconsistency and complication of the borderlands.

To understand how borders are rhetorically constructed, both the visual and the verbal symbols surrounding the border must be taken into consideration (Prelli, 2007). Therefore, my last text will help to strengthen understanding of the border's rhetoric, and specifically will provide account of cultural memory and conceptions of place at the border. This text consists of a five part series of narratives and news titled, *The U.S.-Mexican border: A changing frontier*. The stories were broadcast on National Public Radio from December 1, 2008 to December 5, 2008, and each installment addressed an issue directly affecting the border. Topics included violence in Tijuana, deportees and their attempt to re-enter the U.S., border security, medical tourism and the impact of the fence on community and culture. This text provides a verbal element to comprehension of the border. All of the installments in the series will be analyzed through this research with a focus on the words of those interviewed for the stories. Each story in the series runs about seven minutes and 45 seconds long, and was written and produced by Jason Beaubien, National Public Radio's Mexico City Correspondent. Through the combination of narratives and news, these particular stories provide insight into the difficulties of establishing place at the border, and the struggle to maintain a sense of cultural memory.

Because the U.S.-Mexico border spans 1,900 miles of land, and means significantly different things to a variety of populations, it is impossible to claim that any one (or any three) texts could accurately 'represent' the entire border experience. Instead, these texts were chosen for a similar, but different reason. The photo essay and the radio essays were both produced by popular American news organizations, were intended for an American audience, and both attempted to reveal an authentic understanding of the border for those who exist apart from it. For example, the photographs begin with the westernmost edge of the border and the photo essay moves across the border so that it ends with the easternmost edge. This choice attempts to offer

the audience an understanding of the entire border as it spans from the Pacific Ocean to the Gulf of Mexico. The radio essays provide stories from several different towns along the border – focusing on areas with a high rate of border crossing like Tijuana, Nogales and Juarez/El Paso. The depictions of several locations across the border allow the American viewer access to a more authentic understanding of the border instead of confining understandings to one small area of a vast, cultural area. Together, the maps, photographs and radio essays constitute a rich display of the authentic experience of those who inhabit the U.S.-Mexico border.

### **Method Rationale**

In order to study the three texts, which provide a combination of visual and verbal discourse at the border, a multi-method approach is needed. While one method explains how visual elements align at the borderlands, another method is needed to address the problem of cultural memory and place construction at the border - or what this project's question describes as *difference*. The first method will provide a framework for reading the language of visual symbols. Turning to a semiotic approach to analysis of maps and visual images of the border is fitting because of semiotics' acknowledgment of why and how images function in public discourse. Instead of simply allowing analysis of the aesthetic design elements of the visual texts, social semiotics provides us a language with which to talk about the meaning of images. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) establish the basis for investigation of the visual and discursive representations of the U. S. – Mexico border because of their claim that visual images have become the language of our society even more than verbal communication. Additionally, Prelli (2006) notes that Kress and van Leeuwen work from a rhetorical perspective, because their method, “presumes that meanings are shaped visually through selections of symbols and structures that, necessarily and simultaneously, conceal some meanings even as they reveal

others” (p. 94). Understanding how visual images are constructed to be persuasive and ultimately representative, whether they have been manipulated or not, is a vital step in the comprehension of the cultures and phenomenon targeted by this research.

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) explain that at the root of the changing landscape of communicative messages is globalization. This trend toward globalization, “...which – maybe nearly paradoxically – demands that the cultural specificities of semiotic, social, epistemological and rhetorical effects of visual communication must be understood everywhere, since semiotic entities from anywhere now appear and are ‘consumed’ everywhere,” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 14). While their method provides us with a language to talk about the meanings of visual communication, they make the subsequent recommendation that we must read between the lines of images (and all communication) to understand what discursive or ideological positions gave rise to each text. Their approach to social semiotics relies on two main assumptions: 1) Power structures are inevitable, and people in positions of power can greatly influence the interpretation of signs and symbols, and 2) Representation makes sign makers choose the most appropriate and plausible form of expression, indicating that all signs are motivated and not arbitrary (p. 8, p. 14). Therefore, utilizing this analysis will allow an understanding of the observable as well as the unobtrusive visual symbols that shape meaning at the borderland.

Semiotics is helpful in providing understanding of design elements, the metaphor and the details of visual rhetoric. However, semiotics theories fail to provide understanding of the rhetorical elements of communication. For example, the visual grammar method lacks discussion of the role audience plays in the interpretation of the rhetoric, and of the way visual messages utilize persuasive features. Because Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) method only serves to

provide one-dimensional analysis of the maps and photographs, it is necessary to supplement it with one focusing solely on cultural memory and visual rhetoric. These two methods will work together to provide a more detailed understanding of the design and rhetorical elements that ultimately influence perceptions and consumption of visual rhetoric. The method that best supplements the semiotics theory is provided by Dickinson (1997) in his analysis of Old Pasadena. This second method is appropriate because it does not focus just on visual communication, but instead provides understanding of how the visual elements of landscape interact with cultural memory.

Dickinson (1997) states that his investigation, "...works by relating cultural structures and aesthetic forms, or better, moves between the cultural and the formal, for memories are cultural products while mnemonics are profoundly formal products" (p. 4). He advocates looking at the abstract, cultural, visual and discursive elements in which historical identity details are embedded. Dickinson suggests that memory acts as a resource to help people perform their identities and connect to particular places where these memories are rooted. An especially wide range of visual and discursive elements influences the cultural memory of people who inhabit the borderlands. The framework provided by Dickinson offers the best way to deconstruct the discursive influence the border culture has on construction of place and cultural memory for the people inhabiting the borderlands.

Together, the theory of semiotics and the theory of cultural memory provide a rich framework with which to analyze the visual and discursive elements that shape the rhetoric of borders. These two methods in particular allow for investigation of the maps, images and narratives that represent the rhetoric of the U.S.-Mexico border. Each method complements the other through the layers of discourse they cover. This combination fosters the understanding that

rhetoric of place cannot effectively be viewed through only one perspective. Therefore, combinatorially both methods are necessary to explain the rhetorical meaning of the borderlands.

## **Method Procedure**

### ***Grammar of Images – Narrative Messages***

Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) method for evaluating visual images can be seen through the following several steps. First, it will be determined whether the structure of the message's representation is 1) narrative or 2) conceptual. Understanding the type of message the image is producing allows viewers to account for the impact that message will likely have. For example, narrative messages include or present unfolding actions and events, processes of change, and transitory spatial arrangements. Conceptual messages represent participants in terms of their class, structure or meaning (p. 59).

Narrative messages in visual communication are often distinguishable by certain qualities such as *vectors* – generally lines or arrows – which serve the same purpose in images that a verb serves in language. Consequently, the contrast between foreground and background serve the same purpose in images as locative prepositions do in language. In narrative messages, the participants and processes of the image should be determined and the image should be evaluated in terms of those two features. Kress and van Leeuwen define the two types of participants involved in every semiotic act as *interactive participants* and *represented participants*. The interactive participants are the people participating in the communication act. Both the person creating a message and the person consuming that message would be considered *interactive participants*. *Represented participants*, on the other hand, are the subjects of the communication – the person, place, or thing represented in the speech, writing or image (pp. 47-48). Kress and van Leeuwen discuss how finding the participants can be difficult in detailed, naturalistic



images. This is largely because of the way the two often overlap or interconnect, and because the images are not always explicit in their purpose.

A narrative visual message falls into at least one of Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) five categories of narrative processes. These processes provide a way to talk about the way parts of images or participants in the image interact with one another. They include action processes, reactional processes, speech and mental processes, conversion processes and geometrical symbolism. Action process images involve one participant acting through a vector. If an image or diagram has only one participant, that participant is usually considered an actor. Also, if there is one goal and only one vector acting toward that goal, is also likely considered an action process image. The next process, the reactional process, is typically recognized when the eyeline forms a vector—meaning one entity in the image is looking at something. In the reactional process, the actor and the entity responding to the actor (or the reactor) both must be capable of looking. If an actor is looking at some object that does not possess the ability to look back, then the object is not a reactor. The reactions in these images can be either transactional or non-transactional. Even though captions of images can describe what the actor is looking at, if the reactor is missing from the actual image, then the image cannot be considered a reactional process image. The third type of narrative process is dependent on speech and mental processes and is generally utilized in images like comic strips. This process refers specifically to images where thought or dialogue balloons are drawn to connect people to their speech or thoughts. The fourth process is the conversion process. In these types of images, there is a chain of transactional processes in which each entity in the message acts on, and thus transforms, the next image or entity in the series. Most models of communication theory would be considered in the conversion process category. The final type of process is labeled as geometrical symbolism, and

does not include any participants. Instead, there is only a vector. These images are generally simplistic in nature and fairly simple to interpret.

Kress and van Leeuwen's method is applicable because it will help answer the research question of, "How do the visual and discursive elements that constitute the U.S.-Mexico border function rhetorically to communicate difference and establish place?" The method provides a way to talk about the grammar of images and analyze them. While many scholars of visual rhetoric offer methods for analyzing images, this method is particularly helpful because it allows for analysis of the elements of different types of images – in this case, maps and photographs. Maps and photographs both communicate in different ways and are the products of different types of construction processes. Methodology such as that provided by Kress and van Leeuwen accounts for these differences while providing a way to read the images with respect to the contexts under which they were created. While narrative images are generally process-directed and are often representations of spatial structures, conceptual images generally follow similar patterns and are largely determined by their overall internal order.

### ***Grammar of Images – Conceptual Messages***

The second representation is conceptual rather than narrative. This means the image represents participants in their more generalized sense – often referring to them in terms of class, structure or meaning. Conceptual representations use either 1) classificational, or 2) analytical processes. The ordering of the image itself produces the relations that establish the classification. In classificational process images, a *subordinate* is established through its role or dependence on a *superordinate*. Taxonomies are considered classificational processes and an appropriate example of these are taxonomies or other diagrams that establish hierarchies. Analytical processes relate participants in terms of their part-whole structure. The two types of participants

involved in analytical processes are the *carrier*, or whole, and the *possessive attributes*, or parts. Maps often fall into the analytical process category, because most of them have generally the same structure. There is a carrier – usually the country, state, or region being mapped. The parts inside the map can be viewed as positive attributes. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) argue that maps are created carefully for an analytic purpose:

Some maps focus on geographical features such as waterways, altitude, etc., while others concentrate on social and political boundaries. Analysis always involves selection. Some attributes or characteristics of the Carrier are singled out as criterial in the given context or generally, while others are ignored, treated as non-essential and irrelevant (p. 88)

Maps are not arbitrary drawings of lines and space. Whether or not it is easy to interpret the characteristics of the map, it is important to carefully consider which elements should be selected for analysis. For example, a map may be scaled in a way that affects the overall understanding of the map, or a border may have subtle differences in one map that are not present in another. What is selected for analysis should be determined based on the purpose of the overall study – so, for the purposes of this research, the international border will be given the most attention.

After acknowledging the analytical processes of the visual communication, the next step in the semiotic method created by Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) addresses how to analyze the composition of the text, and what meanings the composition brings to the forefront. When Prelli (2006) utilized Kress and van Leeuwen's method of semiotics to address an oceanic border dispute between the U.S. and Canada, he only utilized the composition of features analysis provided in *Reading images*. The dispute that Prelli investigated involved two maps: one from Canada, and one from the United States, of the Gulf of Maine. In which, each country indicated their understanding of where the ocean border exists.

Prelli's (2006) straightforward interpretation of Kress and van Leeuwen's (2006) method pared analysis of conceptual images down to six steps: 1) Locating, 2) figuring, 3) imposing

disposition, 4) displaying objectivity, 5) literalizing the metaphorical and 6) refiguring the literal. This simplified interpretation of Kress and van Leeuwen's composition analysis will conclude the semiotics portion of this methodology. The first step of composition analysis involves *locating* the center of the image. Whether intentional or unintentional, the symbols or space located in the center of the image are generally seen as the most important part of the image. The second step involves *figuring* the image to determine if and where hidden metaphors exist within the text. Imbedded in this step of the method is the process of naming the visual vehicle that invokes the metaphor. The subsequent step of *imposing disposition* on the visual image guides us to ask how dispositio, or taxis, works rhetorically to structure the attitudes of those who see the props. Kress and van Leeuwen distinguish spatially structured analytical patterns that are either *exhaustive* – showing all there can possibly be to an image – or *inclusive* in that they only display part of what the carrier saw in them. The fourth step involves *displaying objectivity* in order to show how the image (or visual rhetoric) is scaled. The fifth section *literalizes the metaphorical*. Discourse analysis can be particularly helpful in this section step, because it can reveal how connected the audience is to the metaphor and history. In the final step, the literal is *refigured*, and this is where metaphorical language is removed so that the literal situation at hand can be exposed.

These six steps work in sequence to provide a clear understanding of an image based on its composition and context. This is pertinent to my research question, because simply observing photographs of the U.S.-Mexico border, for example, does not allow for inclusion of the context of the issues plaguing the borderlands. Simply observing images and discussing their composition with regards to their artistic merit might be helpful for other purposes. However, in order to understand how *place* and difference are communicated at the border, it is necessary to

use a methodology that allows interpretation of how the context influenced the composition of the image. The method provided by Kress and van Leeuwen allows for this interpretation.

### ***Cultural Memory***

Due to the largely interpretive nature of cultural memory, Dickinson's (1997) method requires a different type of attention than the semiotics theory. Dickinson explains that landscapes of memory and consumption are confronted every day. Furthermore, these landscapes "draw on memories in an attempt to authenticate themselves as sites and to authenticate the identities of those who visit them" while "personal identity becomes a constant project of consumption and performance" (Dickinson, 1997, p. 2, 5). Consumption and memory significantly impact the way identities are preformed, and memory places are a location where these two actions intersect and influence one another. Dickinson argues that memory is the grammar for performative identities, and that through analysis of memory places, "We can find...the foundations and remnants of unified past out of which we can construct a completed present" (p. 21). Memories of the past are often on display in a place, and allow identities to be performed within the present place.

Dickinson's (1997) method allows me to answer my research question because of the way it accounts for how historical perceptions of a place are seen through present-day memory performances in that place. The NPR radio essays provide narrative examples of these memories. Additionally, they act as a display of varied understandings of the way the U.S.-Mexico border's history has shaped identities of present consumers' identification within the border *place*. These essays include many interviews with people currently inhabiting the borderlands – along with their perceptions of history's influence on the current state of the border, as well as their understanding of how the border has shaped their identity. However, because the essays were

produced by an American news industry, they still represent the American view of borderland culture – and contribute only to the American understanding of the border. Dickinson's method provides a way to not only analyze the way place memories are performed and shape identity, but also how to critique the way these memories are presented to the public.

In his article, Dickinson (1997) looks at elements of nostalgia appearing throughout his *place*, Old Pasadena. He examines these sensory elements based on which of them are apparent at various speeds of consumption – what one sees while walking through a place is different than what can be viewed when the place is driven by or flown over. The sensory elements of a memory place will conflate to create meaning, and this understanding will be beneficial to the study of the U.S.-Mexico border. Dickinson explores the sensory elements of place through several steps: 1) localizing fragmentation and nostalgia, 2) legends and history of the place, 3) the automobile gaze, 4) the pedestrian gaze, and 5) the shopper's gaze. These steps refer to the way the place is approached with previous conceptions and personally experienced in different ways. Furthermore, the way in which a person has their experience – and the way they move across or through a place – alters their memories of it.

Initially, Dickinson (1997) argues that to begin to form an understanding of the collective cultural memory of a place, one must localize the fragmentation and nostalgia that occurs in the experience of the place. He explains that Old Pasadena is a liminal, or transitional space, because its visitors and inhabitants have fragmented identities and divided understandings of its meanings. Here, it will be necessary to explore how and why a particular place, the U.S.-Mexico border, is an example of the loss of stabilized place and is instead a place of conflicting images, confounding historicization, fragmentation, and ultimately Balkanization. Furthermore, I will be

interested in analyzing the artifact to see how a place authenticates itself and combats its fragmentations through the memories of its inhabitants and visitors.

In Dickinson's second step, he argues for awareness of the legends and history surrounding that place. While the U.S.-Mexico border has a long and complicated history, it does have several legends, and clearly possesses what Dickinson refers to as "rhetorical strength" (p. 7). Rhetorical strength is displayed in a place through two ways: "first, through the memories encoded by inscriptions, signs and legends; second, by the landscape's architectural style" (p. 7). Both of these provide instructions for reading the landscape. Here, it is necessary to consider which signs and legends are consistently repeated, and therefore contribute to the historicity of the place. Also, Dickinson suggests that understanding the language that is both specific to the place, and consistently repeated, allows for understanding of these signs and legends.

Once the context of the place and its history are considered, the place can be analyzed with regard to the pace through which it is experienced and consumed. Dickinson labels these *paces* as *the automobile gaze*, *the pedestrian gaze*, and *the shopper's gaze*. The *gaze* does not just refer to what can be observed visually, but instead represents the overall sensory experience of a place gained through that method of travel. Additionally, the 'pace of the gaze' serves as an analogy for the thoroughness of observation of the place – not just as the literal *pace* of the experience. Also, this step requires a reading of the built landscape through analysis of the way architectural style is repeated and discussed by people inhabiting the memory place. The people interviewed in the NPR essays offer representations of each of these gazes – with the automobile gaze referring to what can be observed through a brief and quickly-moving tour of the place, the pedestrian gaze referring to what is experienced while moving through the place at a walking pace, and the shoppers gaze referring to the experience of a critical, thorough observer of a place.

For example, analysis through the automobile gaze requires ascertainment of the unfounded judgments people make of a place, and how the fragmentation of the memory place is misunderstood or covered to distanced observers. Analysis through the pedestrian gaze necessitates understanding of the fragmentation and the way the place contributes to a vast variety of identity performances. Dickinson explains that those experiencing a place through the pedestrian gaze desire a unified understanding of cultural memory, but because each person represents a different past, the possibility for a unified memory experience is most often denied. The observer approaching from the shopper's gaze is aware of how power relationships have shaped the memory place, and allow space for contention of the "meanings and relationships the site argues for" (Dickinson, 1997, p. 19). By moving analysis of a place through each of these gazes, it is possible to understand the fragmented levels of understanding that accompany a memory place. Furthermore, it allows for a better understanding of why a person might perform their identity and memory in a particular way. This process lends itself to analysis of the U.S.-Mexico border, because the NPR essays acknowledge both the different ways people travel (and emigrate) across the border, as well as the way people inhabit the borderland place. Additionally, the NPR essays provide discussions of the border experience from people working from each type of gaze.



## CHAPTER 4 - The Grammar of Border Images

The method created by Kress and van Leeuwen provides a language for which to talk about images. Their particular message makes it possible to understand what discursive or ideological positions gave rise to a particular text. The social semiotic approach that gives rise to Kress and van Leeuwen's method follows two main premises. First, that power structures are inevitable and that people in positions of power can control the way messages are ultimately interpreted, and that second, sign makers must choose the most appropriate and plausible form for their expression if they want their messages to be understood.

According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), all images present messages that are either *narrative* or *conceptual*, and the first step in analyzing the grammar of an image's message is to determine in which of these categories the image falls. Narrative messages are those that show direct action existing between two or more of the participants (elements) in the image. They are usually images depicting, "unfolding actions and events, processes of change, [or] transitory spatial arrangements" (p.79). Conceptual messages do not contain vectors and instead portray participants "in terms of their more generalized and more or less stable and timeless essence, in terms of class, structure or meaning" (p. 79). Images that contain lines or vectors that indicate and clarify the relationship between the items in the image present narrative, or as Kress and van Leeuwen originally labeled them, *presentational* messages (p. 59). Kress and van Leeuwen further explain that the features of narrative messages are generally easier to "translate" to linguistic structures than conceptual messages, because the images contain arrows or lines to divide or clarify the content (p. 76). Consequently, if there is not a vector present, the image will belong to the conceptual category (p. 59). Kress and van Leeuwen admit that a few images may

incorporate both types of messages, or may be difficult to interpret as belonging to one category or another. However, the classification of the messages presented by both the National Geographic photograph essay and the maps chosen for this analysis is clearly discernible. Using Kress and van Leeuwen's grammar of images method to first analyze the photographs and then the maps will guide this research in hopes of more clearly establishing how visual representations of the U.S.-Mexico border reinforce difference and influence understandings of place. A critical read of the grammar of images should reveal the way the objects, people or places represented by the image naturally bring forward some of their features and suppress others. Images simultaneously provide a variety of messages to the viewers – some that welcome the viewer, some that evoke some nostalgia from the viewer, and some that make the viewer feel removed. Reading the grammar of images provides reasons for why and how particular visual messages produce these reactions.

### **The Grammar of Borderland Photographs**

The National Geographic photograph essay was printed in the May 2007 issue of the magazine and is still available on the magazine's website. An article in the same issue notes that although the Secure Fence Act was the first federal policy to build a structure across a vast area of the U.S.-Mexico border, other barriers and fences at the same international boundary have been under construction since the 1990s (Bowden, 2007). The sixteen images in this essay portray locations along the border from its most Western to its most Eastern points. The majority of the images contain depictions of the fence, although only a few of these images portray portions of the fence constructed as a result of the Secure Fence Act.

In order to effectively read these images, it is necessary to first determine whether the images utilize narrative or conceptual processes. Although it is possible for some photographic images to fall into the narrative category, the photographs chosen for this analysis all contain only conceptual processes. Each image in the photo essay is conceptual because it is free of vectors, and does not contain explicit transactions between participants. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) explain that a vector does not necessarily always appear in the form of an arrow, because in a photograph, for example, a transaction would be apparent if one person was pointing at another. However, none of the images in the National Geographic photo essay contain any participant acting directly upon another. For example, one photo in the National Geographic set depicts a small, barricade-like fence near the Organ Pipe Cactus National Monument in Arizona. Behind the fence are some cacti and other desert plants, and in the far distance there are some mountains. This is one of the few pictures that does not depict a large, imposing fence structure. This image is an example of a conceptual process because the represented participants in the photo (i.e. the cacti, plants, rocks, fence and mountains) are not acting upon one another through a vector. At first glance that the beam comprising the middle of the fence is a vector because it is a long, straight line, but the beam is not pointing *at* anything in such a way that action is indicated upon it. Instead, the image depicts the desert in terms of its overall class or structure as a landscape. Though two other photos contain people, the people in the image are located in the background of the picture, and only their backs are visible. Another image depicts a horse, but the animal in this photograph, like the people in the other, is located in the background of the image. Neither the horse nor the people are impacting another participant in their images. Kress and van Leeuwen explain that even if there are multiple participants located within an image, there must be an “indicator of directionality, [that] mean something like ‘is connected to’, is

conjoined to’, ‘is related to’” in order to establish the impact of one participant onto another (p. 59). This lack of *actors* ensures the classification of these photos as containing only conceptual messages.

Prelli (2007) differentiates narrative messages from conceptual ones by explaining that “Conceptual patterns impose logical or spatial relationships on participants” instead of depicting participants that directly act upon passive receivers through vectors (p. 95). Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) divide conceptual message representations into processes that are either classificational or analytical. While an image may be comprised of both classificational and analytical processes, one process or the other usually dominates it. Classificational processes use taxonomies to establish a hierarchical order where certain participants are subordinated to at least one *superordinate* participant. The visual depiction of the subordinate and superordinate participants is either symmetrical across both the horizontal and vertical axes of the image, or is explicitly depicted through a tree-shaped structure where the participants are ordered so that one is shown on a higher level than the other. For example, most models of theories are images that contain classificational processes because of the way vectors are used to direct viewers through a process or idea. Further examples can be seen in photograph sets of employees at businesses – the newest employees usually appear at the bottom, and the structure continues so that the top of the photo composite contains the most upper-level management. Although photographs generally employ some type of hierarchical arrangement, the photographs chosen for this project contain mostly analytical processes because they provide a part-whole representation of the participants. Furthermore, Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) explain that analytical processes are the norm, particularly for photographs, because “the defining characteristic of an analytical process is in fact a ‘default’ one. It lies in the absence of vectors and the absence of compositional symmetry

and/or tree structures” (p. 91). Kress and van Leeuwen are also quick to address the fact that the distinctions between classificational and analytical processes are simply tools to aid in the reading of the image and are not concrete, exhaustive measures for every image because images can contain a variety of processes. This does not imply that language provided by Kress and van Leeuwen does not hold true often enough, but that when reading images, one should not disregard the possibility for other processes to be at work in the visual message.

In Prelli’s (2007) analysis of images, he utilizes a six-step method based on Kress and van Leeuwen’s (2006) grammar of visual images: 1) locating, 2) figuring, 3) imposing disposition, 4) displaying objectivity, 5) literalizing the metaphorical and 6) refiguring the literal. Prelli develops these six steps as a way to proceed after classifying the type of message as narrative or conceptual. These steps involve a combination of the specific language Kress and van Leeuwen developed for talking about the grammar of images, and of ways to read the image in its context. These six steps will provide the remainder of the photographic analysis. The first step of *locating* within the images allows an understanding of the hierarchies displayed within the image. Kress and van Leeuwen explain that images produced by Eastern cultures and images produced for children most often place the focus, or most important part of the message, in the center of the image. While some Western art, and most Western newspapers and magazines place the most important information in the top and left of an image, photographs and maps are one area of Western culture where the most important part of the message tends to appear in the center of an image. Kress and van Leeuwen state that, “even when the Centre is empty, it continues to exist *in absentia*, as the invisible (denied) pivot around which everything else turns, the place of the ‘divine ruler’” (p. 197). In the majority of the images, some part of the fence appears in the center. While most of the photos are taken latitudinally, a couple of the photos are

taken facing the fence as one would see it if they were trying to cross. One particular image depicts the new fence – an imposing metal and mesh structure – in Otay Mesa, California from the perspective of someone facing south. The fence itself takes up the majority of the picture, and at the center is a heavy, deadbolted door. Another photo from Tijuana depicts a decrepit metal fence from the perspective of someone crossing from Mexico into the U.S. On the fence hangs a thin but tall cross with the words “NO IDENTIFICADO” as a memorial for someone who died trying to cross the border. In most of the images, the center of the image depicts the fence disappearing into the distance – making apparent the vastness of the border, and the way the fence affects its appearance. The image appears first in the series, and despite the clear blue sky behind the fence, the viewer is made to feel as though they are not welcome to partake in whatever is occurring on the other side of the fence. Placing the cross at the center of the image makes inevitable the acknowledgement of the death that had occurred there and the danger that could face those attempting the same feat. Had the cross been placed farther in the background or off to the side of the image, the message would not be as clear. However, the central location of the memorial cross lends the entire image a certain weight.

In the second step of the method for reading images, it is necessary to *figure* the image to determine where hidden metaphors exist within the text. Images are configured in a certain way to invoke associations for the viewer, and this step involves looking at what associations and metaphors exist within the image. The majority of photos clearly depict the fence, and also clearly depict the landscape of the borderlands. The metaphors invoked by the fence itself are varied. The fence could represent the division between a world power and a nation that is less privileged, and it could also represent the border closing or refusal to welcome new immigrants on the behalf of the U.S. Several of the photos display the way development of Mexican cities

pushes right up to the border in areas where development on the U.S. side is not anywhere near enough to appear in a photo of the fence. These photos are particularly interesting because in them the Mexican side of the border appears to be heavily developed, and on the U.S. side of these images the landscape appears as a barren desert, unsuitable for development. This reveals the hidden metaphor of U.S. privilege and acts as an indication of the development boom in Mexico due to NAFTA – especially because these photos present the Mexican border towns in a way that makes them appear dirty, crowded and undesirable. The photos embody American privilege because of the idea that people usually settle and build towns in places where the land provides something they need, like water or rich soil. The close proximity of the Mexican towns to the U.S.-Mexico border imply that the border, or possibly the U.S. provides something these towns need. Conversely, the lack of development on the American side indicates that the needs of Americans are met somewhere apart from the border. Another picture depicts a fully barren area of desert East of Naco, Arizona where a monument stands to commemorate the purchase of the Southern regions of Arizona and New Mexico in 1853. The monument stands on a hill on the U.S. side of the border, and its formidable presence serves as a synecdoche for the imperialism and domination of the U.S. in their conquering of the Western hemisphere.

The third step draws heavily from the language Kress and van Leeuwen use to discuss the process of reading images. This step involves *imposing disposition* on the image to show the way taxis (the structure) works rhetorically to organize the attitudes of those who view the images. Earlier, it was established that the images in the National Geographic photo essay would be considered *analytical conceptual* images according to Kress and van Leeuwen. It was also established earlier that an image containing mostly analytical processes relates the participants in terms of their part-whole relationship, where one *carrier*, the whole, and any number of

*possessive attributes*, the parts, combine to represent the image (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 87). For Cook and Jenshel's photos of the larger landscape, the carrier is the U.S.-Mexico border itself, and in others revealing a close-up image of the fence, the carrier is then simply the fence. By simply acknowledging the captions and subject of the photo essay, it is apparent what the pictures are of, and thus, what the carrier is. However, because the photograph can only show possessive attributes of the carrier, and not the carrier in its entirety, (i.e. *the border* or *the fence*) the photos in this particular photo essay can be considered *unstructured* analytical processes (p. 92).

Additionally, many images containing unstructured analytical processes also would be considered to have *inclusive* analytical processes. Kress and van Leeuwen differentiate between images that contain *exhaustive* analytical processes that exhaustively represent the entire carrier and inclusive analytical processes in which large portions of the carrier remain unaccounted for. For example, if someone were to photograph a car, it would be possible to photograph the entire car, exhaustively representing the car, or to only photograph part of it, showing some of the positive attributes of the car, but leaving much of the actual carrier unseen. The images in Cook and Jenshel's photo essay attempt to depict the border as realistically as possible, but because the entire border and the entire fence can never be shown in a detailed photograph, these images remain *inclusive*. Kress and van Leeuwen explain that, "In inclusive analytical structures, the Possessive Attributes do not exhaustively take up the space of the carrier. They are contained *within* the Carrier, and so take up part of the space, but not all – other parts are left blank, unanalyzed" (p. 96). Furthermore, Kress and van Leeuwen address how landscapes themselves can be read as analytical structures where the landscape itself is the carrier, and the rocks and trees become represent the possessive attributes (p. 107). One photo of the border taken from



Naco, Sonora is an example of an image that includes one main carrier and several possessive attributes – one of which becomes another carrier. The photo is taken from the perspective of one looking directly north and depicts the two fences being used to denote the border in this area. These fences overlap in the image, and together become the carrier of *fence*. However, the bed of a black pick-up truck appears in the foreground of the image. This is another example of an inclusive carrier, because the way it is layered in the image with the fence, it becomes a possessive attribute of the border/fence. However, it becomes its own carrier at the same time because of its own possessive attributes – in this photo, the majority of the truck bed's possessive attributes are the innumerable *Tecate* cans lying haphazardly in it (*Tecate* being one of the most popular beers in Mexico).

The visual structure of the images – what is the carrier, what is included or excluded – inclines viewers to adopt certain attitudes about the subject of the image. Kress and van Leeuwen address how just as sentences can be simple or complex, pictures can too. They explain that many pictures have subordinate processes embedded in them, and these embedded structures are made less or more important by their position and size in the image (pp. 107-109). In the image with the double fence and the truck bed full of *Tecate* cans, the border looks impassible, whereas the mountainous U.S. landscape on the other side looks majestic in the far distance. The sheer number of beer cans in the foreground of the image indicates that people are nearby despite the overall desolate appearance of the landscape. While the picture is technically one of the border fence, the size and location of the beer cans lend weight to their presence in the image. Most of the other images – nine of the 16 – are structured in a way that shows the border or fence disappearing into the horizon. This structure choice – of attempting to include as much of the carrier as possible – inclines the viewer to consider the vastness of the borderlands, and to

consider what a feat the construction of a border fence truly is. In these images, the fence is the carrier, and the possessive attributes that appear on either side of the fence are often unnoticeable in the presence of the fence.

In the fourth step of Kress and van Leeuwen's method, it is necessary to *display objectivity* in order to explore how the image is scaled. Once its scale is understood, Kress and van Leeuwen employ ways to interpret the meaning of the image's scale. This step involves understanding the position of the *interactive participants*, and how these participants communicate with each other – for example, understanding how the producer of the image and the viewer of the image communicate with each other. Kress and van Leeuwen explain how the producer of an image must create their own idea of who their viewers are and in which context they will view the image. This creates a disjunction between the contexts of production and reception, and this disjunction “causes social relations to be *represented rather than enacted*” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 114-116). Certain things are consistently communicated to viewers through certain choices of the producer regarding scale and perspective. In photographs where a person or thing is making eye contact with the viewer, the viewer becomes object to the look. Conversely, if an represented participant in an image is looking away or has their back facing the frame, the viewer is given the illusion that that the represented participants do not know they are being watched. This illusion, “‘offers’ the represented participants to the viewer as items of information, objects of contemplation, impersonally, as though they were specimens in a display case” (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 119). Additionally, Kress and van Leeuwen discuss the size of the frame and the social distance used in an image, and they further separate the gaze into shots ranging from ‘close’ to ‘very long.’

The only two images in the photo essay to contain humans within the frame do so in the same way. The photo of the very western edge of the border reveals railroad spikes in the sand of the Pacific Ocean to mark the border into the ocean. One person appears off in the distance, wading in the shallow water. The person is hardly noticeable on first glance at the image, and even with a scrutinizing perspective it is unclear whether the person is male or female. Their back is turned toward the camera, and because their entire body fits easily in the shot, Kress and van Leeuwen would describe the frame as a ‘very long social distance’ shot. Similarly, the other photo to include people in the frame, a photo of the border from Agua Prieta, Mexico, reveals three people in the distance. From their clothes, it can be assumed the people are young men. They are walking along the border fence, but with their backs to the camera, and at a very long social distance from the viewer. People in these kinds of images are seen as having little connection with the viewer – they remain at the distance of ‘stranger’ or ‘other.’ Even if they were facing the camera, the distance of the shot would not allow the viewer to see the facial features of the people in the image. This maintains their position as the *other* – part of the landscape, but a stranger to the viewer.

In the photograph of the fence and the young men from Agua Prieta, one of the three men is turning his face in the direction of the camera even though his back is also turned toward the camera. Kress and van Leeuwen discuss how a full back toward the photographer has a fairly complex meaning – one of a subject who appears vulnerable but at the same time can also be perceived as confrontational. However, if a person’s back is turned toward the camera, but the person is turning their face or gaze to the camera, the result, according to Kress and van Leeuwen, is usually this message: “although I am not part of your world, I nevertheless make contact with you, from my own different world” (p. 138). This message may not be what the

young man who glanced toward the camera lens had in his mind, but it seems to be representative of the difference that images can perpetuate.

Another way that scale and structure of influences interpretation of an image's meaning is through the angle the images – primarily photographic images – are taken. Kress and van Leeuwen claim that if represented participants have been photographed from a high angle, then the interactive participants (both the photographer and the viewer of the photograph) are in a position of power over them. If the represented participants are viewed from a lower angle, then they are in a position of power over the interactive participants. The degree of the angle can effect the amount of power one type of participants are seen as having over the other. All but one of the images in this photo essay are viewed at eye level; indicating equality between the interactive participants and the represented participants – the borderlands. While some images are shown from an angle slightly higher than eye level, it seems that this choice was only made so that certain parts of the landscape could be included in the frame and the represented participants were not shown from a high enough angle to indicate a degree of power over the interactive participants. The one exception to the images that appear to indicate equality between the interactive and represented participants is one of the photos from Agua Prieta, Mexico. The image is a close shot from the Mexican side of the border depicting a large metal sculpture of two eyes hanging on the border fence. The low angle from which the photograph was taken creates the sense that the represented participants – in this case the fence and the sculpture of eyes – are in a position of power over the interactive participants. Even though the sculpture is slightly abstract, it still feels as though the eyes and the fence are looking down at those who view the image.

Kress and van Leeuwen's fifth step of *literalizing the metaphorical* lends insight to the context of the images being read. While previous steps help explain the way relations can and do exist between interactive and represented participants, it is still necessary to understand what the composition of the image series as a whole articulates. The overall composition of the images, in combination with knowledge of their context, serves to literalize the metaphors produced by the images. The images in the National Geographic photo essay would be considered *multimodal* images by Kress and van Leeuwen because they did not appear to their audience as just photographs – they accompanied an article about the U.S.-Mexico border in widely distributed national publication, and each image was presented with its own caption. For example, an image taken from Nogales, Arizona shows how close the crowded cities push up against the border on the Mexican side (in the background of the image). On the U.S. side, the only structure visible other than the fence is a baseball backstop. This image could reinforce the metaphors of U.S. prosperity and Mexican poverty. However, the metaphor of U.S. privilege and prosperity dissipates when one reads the photo's caption:

Border Patrol agents in Nogales, Arizona, protect themselves with an old baseball backstop. Before they put it up, would-be border crossers (or helpers attempting to create a diversion) would toss rocks over the wall in the direction of the agents; now officers park behind it and monitor the border in safety (Cook & Jenshel, 2007)

Understanding that the backstop does not stand along the border for people to play games of baseball behind, and realizing that some people who cross the border use violence to help them cross the border changes the initial perception of the image that one might have.

Another way that the composition of the photo essay as a whole influences the audience's understandings is through the linear construction of the essay. The photos have been available online, and were promoted in the article that ran in the May 2007 National Geographic. The majority of people who seek the photo essay out are likely people who read National Geographic

or who at least occasionally visit the magazine's web site. However, it is possible that others found it through a search engine or other Internet directory. Furthermore, the photo essay is set up so that the photographs appear in order from the westernmost point of the border to the easternmost. This composition choice helps the viewer feel as though they are observing the border while moving from West to East over it. Kress and van Leeuwen state that when an audience sporadically skips around while viewing a series of images that have a particular order, they often feel guilty or dishonest. Additionally, the photos appear on top of their captions – forming a hierarchy that offers the images to the audience before explaining the images' meanings. An audience is usually intuitively able to understand and navigate this hierarchy – which, in the case of this photo essay, is to view the pictures in order from left to right (west to east), and from top to bottom (photo to caption). When audiences do follow this hierarchy, they are intuitively led to believe that they gained the most accurate and true depiction of whatever it was that they observed.

Someone viewing only the photographs out of their context, regardless of their order, could have a variety of interpretations of the photo series' meanings and of the photographer's intent. For example, a person who strongly supports the fence could easily see the set of images as a pro-fence effort where Mexican cities are depicted as undesirable, and the fence is a fortress of U.S. power and protection from illegal immigrants. However, as neutral as the captions appear, adding them to the images allows the photographers to direct the audience. For example, the sculpture of the eyes in Agua Prieta certainly appear scrutinizing in the photograph, but the caption reveals that they were created by a Mexican artist who wanted Mexican people to be aware that they are being watched and that the choice to climb the fence or sneak into the U.S. is often a dangerous one. Understanding the context of the photo – both where it appears and what

its history or story might be – offers a clearer idea of what inspired the image to be composed in a particular way.

The sixth and final step of the method involves *refiguring the literal*, which requires removal of the metaphorical language so that the literal situation that called for the creation of the image can be exposed. There are many metaphors that are invoked through Cook and Jenshel's photo essay. However, the removal of ideas like *U.S. imperialism* and *Mexican poverty* from the discussion of the border allows a deeper message to be revealed by the images. In the other Agua Prieta image of the young men walking along the fence, it is difficult to ignore the backs of seven statues appearing in the foreground of the image. To an interactive participant viewing this image for the first time, one would likely assume the statues were of saints and that they appeared in the foreground of the image as a way for the producer of the image to indicate the importance of religion to the people of Mexico. However, the caption of the image reveals that the statues are of Santa Muerte (Saint Death), and that this saint has a skull for a face and is often depicted carrying a reaper. Additionally, the caption reveals that Santa Muerte is not an actual saint, but instead, "a folklore figure increasingly popular with those who live on the edge – drug runners, coyotes, smugglers" (Cook & Jenshel). When the metaphors of religion and innocence are stripped from one's interpretation of the photo, what is left is the serious realization that the problems occurring along the border are a complex part of everyday life for people who inhabit the borderlands. The photo essay taken as a whole reveals the sense that the wall – regardless of whether or not it was needed – is going to provide an unwelcoming façade to a large group of people who need the help of the U.S.

The images selected for this analysis all involved analytical conceptual processes and focused on particular areas of the U.S.-Mexico border. However, the individual photos revealed

much about the metaphors and concepts that surround the border. The presence of the fence in so many of the photos revealed the way a boundary affects a landscape and changes the *place* in which it is built. The fence and other features of the images often served to divide the United States from Mexico in a way that established the difference between the two countries and the dominance of one country over the other. Furthermore, exploring the photo essay in its intended order provides a view of the border from its Western edge to its Eastern one, putting the individual images into a larger context. Photographic images have a way of making us understand whether or not we fit within that image, and on some level, maps have this same ability. This analysis will proceed to explore two different maps to determine how this type of visual image also conceals and reveals certain messages in order to help audiences understand something about their sense of difference or place.

### **Maps of the Borderlands**

The two maps selected for analysis both fall into the category of *conceptual* messages involving primarily *analytical processes*. The U.S. map appears on the National Geographic web page, and can be found simply by clicking the map link on the National Geographic home page. The Mexican map was published on the Official Website for the Government of Mexico. Two maps appeared on this webpage – one of Mexico’s topographical features, and one labeled a political map that focused mainly on the boundaries of Mexico. The political map was the one selected for this analysis. Although maps can be narrative images, the narrative distinction requires the presence of vectors. Maps of war battles or of some other sociological phenomena often contain mostly narrative processes. However, the maps selected for this analysis are both geopolitical atlas maps – created for the purpose of showing boundary lines and location of cities. There are no vectors present within the images, nor is there compositional symmetry



and/or a tree structure. Thus, the maps fall into Kress and van Leeuwen's "default" category of conceptual images containing analytical processes (p. 91). Furthermore, Kress and van Leeuwen explain that maps have the same structure; they just focus on different places, have different scales, and focus on relaying different types of information (p. 88). Neither of the maps used for this analysis have an author listed, but will be referred to as the U.S. map and the Mexican map through the course of this analysis to distinguish between the map produced in Mexico and the map produced in the United States.

The first step of locating the center of the images is a fairly simple one because of the lines of latitude and longitude that grid the map image. The U.S. map is from National Geographic, and depicts all of North America. Because the map is focused on all of North America and not one particular country, the center of the map is in southern Illinois – around Latitude 38 and Longitude -89. The Mexican government produced the other map. It focuses just on the political boundaries and major cities of Mexico. The center is located in south-central area of the Mexican state of Coahuila de Zaragoza. It lies at Latitude 25 and Longitude -102. While maps can be drawn to create associations or persuade people of something, the difference in centers for each map does not reveal much. However, it should be recognized that it was more difficult to find a U.S. produced map focusing solely on Mexico than it was to find a map of the entire North American continent. Conversely, it was nearly as difficult to find a Mexican map focusing solely on the United States.

The second step of figuring the images to reveal hidden metaphors takes a bit of a different turn in the analysis of maps. Neither map hides their purpose, but their potentially unclear audience can be understood by briefly examining the map images. The U.S. map shows a higher volume of cities in the United States than in Canada, Mexico, or Central America. Even

the U.S. states with lower populations, like Montana and Wyoming have more cities listed than the more populated regions of the other countries on the map. The U.S. map demarcates individual states in the U.S. and individual provinces in Canada, but does not demarcate the Mexican states. Additionally, the features of the U.S. map are written in English – assuming an audience fluent in English and concerned mainly with the United States. Similarly, the Mexican map clearly outlines and labels the Mexican States, but does not demarcate the individual states of the U.S. Mexican cities are listed abundantly, but only 21 cities appear in the southern portion of the United States revealed on the Mexican map. The only bias that did not carry over to the Mexican map is the language bias. The Mexican map contains legend and other features in both English and Spanish. The only meanings revealed by the map are not necessarily hidden or very striking, but are interesting nonetheless. Each map has been created for its country's audience, and omits and includes certain elements depending on the need of their audience.

The third step of the method uses Kress and van Leeuwen's language for reading images to show how the structure of the image works rhetorically to organize the attitudes of the audience. In maps, the country, state or region being mapped is the carrier because it is *the whole* being represented in the image. Thus, in the U.S. map, the carrier is North America, and in the Mexican map, the carrier is Mexico. Kress and van Leeuwen explain that "analysis is always about selection," and that in images like maps, certain characteristics of the carrier are brought out in the image and others are concealed or treated as less important (p. 88). If color is used in a map, it is usually reduced to a limited palette and is used to distinguish certain parts from others. Another unique feature of maps is that their possessive attributes are labeled. Maps follow a standard structure – countries located north of other countries usually appear at the top of the image, and a country west of another appears to the left. Additionally, nearly every map includes

lines of latitude and longitude to help orient the maps' audience in relation to the mapped location.

The Mexican map is clearly described as a map of Mexico and its “political boundaries” – referring to the political area known as Mexico. Thus, because the entire carrier, the image of Mexico, is visible, the image of the Mexican map is an exhaustive one. Furthermore, the Mexican map is a spatially structured analytical process because the possessive attributes of the image combine to make one whole structure that is visible in the single image. Calling an image exhaustive does not imply that *analysis* of the image is exhaustive, but instead that the carrier is exhaustively represented by the image. Analysis has to assume that a map showing all the states or regions on a map of a country is representative of the entire carrier. When people view maps, they recognize that it is not practical to show every city on every map, and that the cities understood to be most important to them will be the ones shown in the image. When a map deliberately displays more cities or more details in one area, the message helps the audience understand which part of the map is most important to them. The Mexican map clearly labels the state boundaries, cities, rivers and topographical information for Mexico, but only displays a few major cities in the United States and Guatemala. This indicates to anyone viewing the map, regardless of their previous knowledge of the image, which features are the most important.

The structure and organization of the U.S. map reveals even more to the audience. The Mexican map clearly focuses on one country, whereas the focus of the U.S. map is not as apparent. The U.S. map exhaustively represents the carrier of North America, but the way the represented participants are emphasized organizes the structure for the maps' audience. The individual Mexican states are similar in size to the average U.S. state. However, while the individual states are clearly labeled in the U.S., the individual Mexican states are not. The lack of

cities labeled in Canada is likely a result of Canada's lower population numbers. However, there is no indication for why so many more cities are labeled in the United States than in Mexico aside from the fact that the map was produced in the U.S. The higher volume of information available in the U.S. section of the map directs the audience's focus toward the U.S.

The fourth step of Kress and van Leeuwen's method involves analyzing the scale of the image. This step is largely created for analysis of photographs due to its focus on angle and position of interactive participants – especially the position of the image's producer. However, the scale and position in which maps are available helps emphasize certain features and deemphasize others. In the Mexican map, the lines of latitude are depicted as almost completely horizontal. This allows the U.S.-Mexico border to appear longer than in the U.S. map where the lines of latitude are depicted as having the actual curve they would have on the earth. The curve in the lines of latitude causes the U.S.-Mexico border to become less of a focus in the overall map, because it becomes condensed. Furthermore, the heavy black line used to denote the border in the Mexican map makes the border itself completely distinct from other lines indicating rivers or state boundaries. In fact, the line demarcating the U.S.-Mexico border is one of the two boldest on the map, with the other being the Mexico-Guatemala/Belize border, which appears in the lower right corner of the map. Because of the sheer width of the U.S.-Mexico border, it is a prominent feature of the map. Conversely, the U.S.-Mexico border nearly blends into the countries of the U.S. map. In the U.S. map, each country is outlined in a different color. The translucent orange line drawn around the entire country of Mexico lies right next to the translucent green line drawn around the U.S. – the place where these lines lay next to each other forms the U.S.-Mexico border. The border is difficult to distinguish unless it is viewed with a high zoom. Thus, the scaling of each image impacts the access the audience has to their

observation of the border, and the importance they see the border as having.

In the fifth step of the method it is necessary to explore the context of the images and their overall composition in order to literalize the metaphor enforced by the image. The Mexican map used for this analysis was found on the Mexican government's web site. The map is the only content on the web site to contain English and Spanish, and this is likely because it is on the web site as a resource for Mexican citizens and potential tourists to Mexico. A large amount of the content on the web site is simply facts about Mexico and information for people visiting Mexico. The overall composition of the image fits with the goal of the web site – to provide basic information about Mexico. The map is not complicated or intricately detailed. Additionally, there is only a minimal amount of map detail in the regions outside of Mexico itself. Due to the context of the web site, and considering the languages present on the map, the map itself does not provide its audience with some strong, visceral reaction. Instead, it is most likely not given much consideration past its status as an educational tool. The simplicity, clarity, and size of the map make it easy to navigate and make the focus of the map rather explicit. Although the border itself is drawn in such a way that it does become a focal point of the map, the context of the map likely does not cause the border to receive any extra scrutiny or attention from the map's audience.

The U.S. map appears on the National Geographic web page among many other maps of both topographical and political features of all the world's largest countries. The page contains two maps of each of the seven continents – a geopolitical map like the one selected for this research, and a topographical one. Even though a topographical option exists, the geopolitical map still contains some topographical features like mountain ranges in the U.S., but not in other countries depicted on the map. This further indicates National Geographic's loyalty to the people

living in the distribution area of their magazine – the United States. The maps available on this web site are atlas maps that are available on the web site in an interactive format that allows viewers to zoom in their view of the map and click and drag the map to move it. The zoom feature allows the map to have a larger amount of detail than maps that can only be seen from one distance. The overall composition of the map uses translucent color to demarcate countries, but other than this color, appears fairly simple in terms of color and detail. The added detail on the U.S. section of the map helps reinforce the metaphor of U.S. importance (and superiority) provided by many U.S. produced maps.

The final step of the method requires removing metaphorical language so that the literal situation at hand can be exposed. Neither of the maps were likely produced for some persuasive reason, however, both have an amount of persuasive potential. It is possible that the metaphorical language hiding the meaning of these maps' representations of the border is just the language of the web sites claiming the maps are for educational purpose, and the idea that maps are always objective. Maps are more often drawn for a specific, tangible use than most photographs; yet, it is necessary to consider the purpose and position of cartographers. Until the possibility that maps may not all be objective is considered, it is unlikely that the literal situation plaguing borders can be revealed. The focus placed on the border in the Mexican map draws attention to the meaning the border has in Mexico, and the lack of focus placed on borders and instead placed on the topography and cities of the United States in the U.S. map may lend insight to the way each country perceives the border. In the Mexican map it truly appears as a barrier between the two nations. Conversely, in the U.S. map, the border is only marked by translucent, colored lines. While these lines may provide insight into the larger area of the borderlands, it disregards the barrier that exists between the two nations. Observation of the U.S. map might lead most viewers

to assume the border is unimportant, or at least should not be a focus of the map-viewer's attention. The border is underplayed in such a way that the two countries almost appear to flow into one another (which is not the case with other borders depicted in the map). Whether this is an unintentional move toward a perspective of globalization or the denial of the real problems that plague the border is unclear.

The grammar of the border images provided insight into the way the U.S.-Mexico border is depicted in maps and photographs. The photographic images chosen depicted a variety of features of the border and allowed deeper analysis of the issues plaguing the border. Exploring the different ways in which the fence has been built allowed viewers of these particular images to see the variety of different structures the fence is constructed from and the variety of places it moves through. The maps provided two different cartographical perspectives of the U.S.-Mexico border – that of the U.S. and that of Mexico. Although Kress and van Leeuwen's theory provided ways to understand subtle features of each type of image, like the angle from which the photographs were taken, or the distribution of map features. It is easier to see their claim that images are often persuasive and are constructed in such a way to reveal some features and hide others. Furthermore, Kress and van Leeuwen's method forces the viewer to consider all of the interactive participants that take part in the production and reading of an image, and of all the represented participants that might alter those readings. It is necessary to think of the perspective the map or photograph's producer had when they created their particular image. Images speak, and often do so loudly. The methodology used simply provided a way to interpret their messages.

## **CHAPTER 5 - Cultural Memory at the Border**

The U.S.-Mexico border has been considered an important memory site, and its prominence within a variety of scholarly disciplines indicates the necessity of attempting to understand how cultural memory has been shaped for those whose identities are reliant on the presence of the border (Holling & Dickinson, 2006; Marciniak, 2006). By applying Dickinson's (1997) method to the NPR radio narratives, this analysis will contribute to understandings of how the U.S.-Mexico border itself is a unique cultural memory place. In order to examine the cultural memory of the U.S.-Mexico border, this analysis will first localize fragmentation and nostalgia and then it will explore legends and history of the place. After these steps, the border will be evaluated through the automobile gaze, pedestrian gaze and shopper's gaze.

When approaching analysis of a memory place, Dickinson insists on first locating the fragmentation and nostalgia that place holds for both its visitors and inhabitants. For Dickinson, sites of cultural memory are most often transitional, or liminal, spaces that result in fragmented identities and varied nostalgia for those experiencing them. In the first radio essay exploring Tijuana, Andres Mendez Martinez, a store owner in Tijuana's Avenida Revolucion explains how the Avenida used to be a place where American tourists would come to have fun, purchase souvenirs, and relax, but that an increase in the time it takes to cross the border along with Tijuana's recent increase in drug-related crimes has made the area empty. He further explains that in order to revive business, the Avenida has begun offering services that cater to Mexicans instead of American tourists. This is one example of how a site along the border is not a



stabilized place, but one of liminality, an area of transition between two fixed locations. The meaning of a memory site may undergo subtle transitions constantly, and the changes occurring in the Avandia offer a clear example of the transitional nature of memory places. Additionally, while cities and towns often experience changes in population or business, the transitions and fragmentation of the liminal space often depends on larger changes occurring in the fixed locations that the liminal space lies between. Borders are liminal spaces because they lie where one place ends and another begins, and are thus being continuously pulled toward and rejected by each fixed location (O'Tuathail, 1999). The edges of nations do not necessarily signify an *end*, to the cultures, traditions and people who make up the fixed locations. The liminal space would not exist without the fixed locations on either side, and the policies and laws made in the fixed locations directly affect their edges.

The second radio essay further discusses the fragmentation inherent in memories of the U.S.-Mexico border. NPR correspondent Beaubein reported from the Casa de Migrante in Reynosa, Mexico which was originally a shelter ran by nuns to provide shelter and food to people immigrating into the United States. However, Beaubein explains that the amount of illegal immigrants deported from the U.S. by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement Agency (ICE) has increased 20% from 2007 to 2008, and that the shelter is now filled with recently deported men who are both attempting to find jobs in Mexico and many of whom face criminal charges in the United States. Juan Garcia, a 23-year-old immigrant, was working in a chicken processing plant in Arkansas when an ICE raid of the facility resulted in his deportation and criminal charges. He states, "We just go over there to work, and they think we are criminals, everybody is criminals" (Beaubein, 2008). Garcia is trapped between the two places, and is attempting to achieve the stabilization of being with his family outside of the border's liminality.

The nostalgia the borderlands hold for men like Garcia has also shifted because of the difference between what crossing the border meant when they were immigrating into the United States, and what the border means now that they have been removed from the country. Garcia explains that he was brought to America to work with his father when he was only 13 years old to make money to bring home for their family. The chicken processing plant Garcia had been working in for three years until the time of his deportation paid only \$6.75 per hour. While many people would expect an increase in wages over ten years, the jobs worked by people like Garcia will likely never offer promotions or raises to anyone, much less immigrants working illegally in the United States. He explains that he and other immigrants differ from Americans because they would take any job they could. Garcia's border nostalgia has shifted in another way as well. Initially, the border was a boundary between a place with jobs and money and a place without them. However, while in the U.S., Garcia married and he and his wife had three children. His wife passed away in 2007 so his children are living with his mother-in-law in Arkansas. Now that he has been deported, the border stands between him and his family as well. Not only are identities fragmented throughout the borderlands, but families and other relationships are literally divided as well.

In order to complete the second step in Dickinson's method, it is necessary to address the legends and history that surround the U.S.-Mexico border. A geographical border likely has a richer and more volatile history than many places, but like most sites of cultural memory, their legends and past have a large influence on how the border has been shaped rhetorically. Dickinson suggests that memory places possess "rhetorical strength" that can be analyzed in this step by exploring first the "memories encoded by inscriptions, signs and legends" and secondly, by reading the architectural style of the memory place's landscape (p. 7). One of the most

important legends that the border holds is one that has a nearly opposite meaning for people inhabiting each country that it separates. For many living in Mexico and other Latin American countries, the border represented a gateway into the United States where jobs, and ultimately prosperity, waited. This legend is made explicit in the second radio essay, which focuses on interviews with deportees in several cities just south of the actual border. One man who remained anonymous for the interview explained that he was raised in the United States, but was deported after being approached by the police for his alleged involvement in a domestic dispute. He explains that he cannot stay in Mexico, because he has nothing there – that everything in his life exists over the border in California.

The legend of the United States being a place of prosperity and opportunity has been perpetuated and even enforced by the presence of the border patrol and anti-immigration efforts. And while the U.S. has long been considered a desirable destination for people struggling to find work in Mexico and other Latin American countries, there have been just as many Americans wishing to close off the border. The legends surrounding the border often contain several layers, and are told differently from either side of the border. Juan Garcia, the deportee interviewed in Casa de Migrante states in the second radio essay, “The Americans don't like to work in a job that we would do, they only want the easy jobs and the well-paid, and we took any job that they have for us” (Beaubein, 2008). Garcia’s comment provides evidence of the legend that the jobs filled by immigrants are plentiful, but are jobs considered to be unworthy or undesirable by most American workers. Furthermore, Garcia’s comment serves as a counter-argument to the American legend that immigrant workers take jobs away from U.S. citizens. While the radio essays largely served to present Americans with the Mexican perspective of the border’s legends, the American perspectives are still made apparent in the comments left on the NPR web site

below each essay. Many of the comments left regarding the second radio essay are in opposition to the legends discussed by Garcia and other deported immigrants. A commenter by the name of Dave Francis (Brittanicus) left several of the 65 comments on this essay. The premise of his argument was that *illegal aliens* do take jobs that Americans want to work, and that the employment of illegal immigrants is the largest reason for the economic recession and high unemployment rates. Another commenter named Marilyn Gover (maridane) left the following comment in response to Garcia's goal of returning to the United States:

Those jobs you work that you say no one here wants to do, well they used to pay a lot more than they do now but thanks to you and other illegal alien criminals, citizens can't get those jobs anymore. So don't think or say that we don't want them, we did them before you got here and once we get rid of all of you and we get the pay back up to what it once was, we will do those jobs again. We don't need or want you here (2008, December 3)

Comments like those left by Gover and Francis made up the majority of responses to the second essay – further perpetuating a generally negative disposition towards immigrants in the United States and contributing to the legends of the border.

Another area of the border's history that has had a large role in the shaping of the border's meaning is the history of how the border itself was literally shaped. The overview to the radio series discusses how the border was roughly established in 1848 following the Mexican-American War. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo moved the border from one much farther north – a place so far into the current boundaries of the United States that California, Arizona, Utah and Nevada were all part of Mexico – to its current location along the Rio Grande. Mexico was cut nearly in half after the signing of this treaty. Beaubein states, “for most Americans, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo is at best an obscure historical event. For most Mexicans, it's a monument to the arrogant imperialist ways of their northern neighbor, and they can tell you exactly how much land Mexico lost under the deal of 1848” (Beaubein, 2008). This part of the

border's history has an unmistakable effect on the tension between the two countries, and has shaped the border in more ways than just the physical establishment of the boundary.

A more disturbing sign of the current violence and unrest occurring along the border is described in the fourth essay that describes life in Ciudad Juarez, Mexico's most violent city. The drug cartels and gangs that have come to control many aspects of life in the city have made their presence known explicitly to the people in Juarez by publically executing rival gang members, running public kidnapping rackets, and stringing threatening messages from highway overpasses. Beaubein notes that the steps they take to threaten and terrorize the people of Juarez even led to the hanging of a decapitated corpse from a highway overpass in November of 2008. In the first essay, Beaubein explains that drug wars like those in Juarez are occurring in cities across the border. He states, "The bodies turn up in piles. Some have been shot. Some are strangled. Some are *entepado* — the heads wrapped in duct tape. Some have no heads at all" (Beaubein, 2008). The dead bodies, threats and acts of violence all exist as signs of a place that is not stable or safe, and provide an extreme example of the fragmentation that exists within many liminal spaces. These extremely public acts serve as illustrations of the control the gangs have in this border town provide insight into how the history of unrest at the border is performed and established today.

The second way that Dickinson uses to discover the legends and history of a place is by analyzing the language that is repeated throughout (and is specific to) the place. Flores (2003) explored the impact of the language consistently used in discussions of immigration and the U.S.-Mexico border. She quickly noticed "a uniformity in the public vocabulary surrounding immigration and criminality. Whether invoked directly, the figure of the 'illegal alien' is hauntingly consistent, as is the quick turn to deportation" (p. 363). Flores' findings are consistent

with the language used in the radio essays. Every essay discussed the automatic connection between immigrants and criminals, both from the perspective of the immigrants and the perspective of those in opposition to illegal immigration. In the radio essays themselves, Beaubein consistently referred to those attempting to cross the borders as *migrants*, but the language used by those commenting on the story clearly evidenced which side of the immigration issue each commenter was on. While people like Gover and Francis repeatedly used the terms *illegal aliens* and *criminals*, those commenting in favor of the story, or offering defense for the immigrants discussed in the story, did not use certain terms consistently to discuss matters of the border. Another term that has been prevalent in representations and discussions of the border is *border control*. Nearly all of the radio essays refer to the problem with border control or refer to the duties of border control agents. This language contributes to the historicity of discussions about the border, because it seems to perpetuate the notion that the United States *controls* the border – not just to regulate people and goods crossing into the U.S., but to essentially become the dominant narrative in the world’s understandings of this particular border. As Ono and Sloop (2002) purport, the institutionally supported discourse becomes the dominant discourse, and the language that is not institutionally supported becomes the outlaw discourse. Because, U.S. policy supports the narrative of *border control*, and *illegal aliens*, the immigrant’s perspective becomes part of the outlaw discourse.

The next step in the analysis of the cultural memory of a place is to read the built landscape by looking at repeated architectural styles, and what is observable at the place through the gazes by automobile, walking through the place, and *shopping* or moving slowly and methodically through the place. Mitchell (2002) addresses the rhetorical value of reading landscapes by stating, “Landscape is a medium of exchange between the human and the natural,

the self and the other. As such, it is like money: good for nothing in itself, but expressive of a potentially limitless reserve of value” (p. 5). Dickinson’s method provides a way to explore this landscape from a variety of perspectives. In viewing a landscape from the automobile gaze, Dickinson (1997) states, “From a speeding car the buildings glide by too quickly for the driver/passenger to note the intricacies of difference. At 30 miles-per-hour, the style of one building blends with the next, the differences of age covered by the blur of passing images” (p. 11). At this speed, the viewer is only able to see the surface of a place, and is not given enough time to consider the meaning of what they are viewing. The fragmentation of the memory place is often misunderstood or hidden from the automobile observer.

When observing from the automobile gaze, likely the most dominant part of the landscape is the 670 miles of fence being built along the U.S.-Mexico border. Whether driving across or along the border, the fence has become synonymous with the border for people both in support of and in opposition to it. In the fifth radio essay, Beaubien interviews citizens of Eagle Pass, Texas – a city that was sued by the U.S. government after they refused to clear land for the fence. Now, a 15-foot high fence separates the golf course from the rest of the city, and has drawn mixed reactions from the citizens of Eagle Pass. Carmen Hernandez states that she believes the fence will help discourage people from trying to cross and that it will impede the crossing of people smuggling drugs and other illegal substances into the U.S. The imposing nature of the fence itself will serve as a deterrent. For others, the fence acts as a reminder of the division between the U.S. and Mexico, and will only serve to exacerbate relations between the two countries. Chad Foster, the mayor of Eagle Pass, explains that the fence will become the image the image that people will correlate with the city. He states, “The ambiance is going to be affected. If your friends and neighbors from Mexico are coming in across our international

bridges, a fence or a wall is not an inviting structure” (Beaubien, 2008). Foster’s concern is representative of what is often hidden when viewing a landscape from the automobile gaze. As Dickinson explains, the fragmentation of a memory place is often misunderstood or covered to the distanced observers. Instead, only one of the fragmented perspectives, the dominant discourse, becomes evident. For people driving by Eagle Pass, the fence does not welcome them, it instead implies that the people in this city wish to be divided from their Mexican neighbors – and whether that is the intent of the majority in the city or not, it becomes the dominant narrative to automobile onlookers.

Another aspect of the border that occurs within the automobile gaze is the prejudging of immigrants as criminals. Those in the U.S. who oppose immigration tend to disregard the multitude of factors contributing to one’s choice to immigrate into the country – and often what they leave behind in their home country when they do. Eagle Pass resident Refungio Ramirez opposes the fence, not because it is unwelcoming, but because it will not interfere with the efforts of illegal immigrants. He states, “I’m against illegal immigration, but what they doing, this is not going to stop them. No way. The coyotes are going to keep on doing the job” (Beaubien, 2008). By choosing to call illegal immigrants *coyotes*, he sheds light on one of the unfounded judgments that dominate the U.S.-Mexico border discourse, and the refusal to acknowledge the other side of the fragmented border narrative. Judgments like these are evidence of the way fragmentation within a memory place is misunderstood or not considered by observers from the automobile gaze.

When viewing a landscape and discourse from the pedestrian gaze, one attempts to understand the way the place contributes to a variety of identity performances, and desires to produce a unified understanding of cultural memory. However, Dickinson explains that because



each person represents a different past, the possibility for a unified memory experience is often denied. So reading the landscape from the pedestrian gaze requires attention to the two general categories of nostalgia in a place: 1) nostalgia for the exotic, and 2) nostalgia for home. Walking through the border cities and communities reveals a more complicated picture than what is seen from the automobile gaze. As Dickinson states, “there is no one past, no one nostalgia,” and through understanding the multiple layers of memories, the pedestrian gaze can reveal more about how people have attempted united nostalgias, and how most have been unsuccessful (p. 15).

Most border communities display a variety of influences from the variety of nationalities and histories brought by their inhabitants. While Mexican culture is often on display, many communities still portray signs of the Spanish influence on the culture as well as reminders of the American commercial invasion. The fifth radio essay describes the Spanish architecture in the landscape of Piedras Negras, Coahuila a city directly south of the border from Eagle Pass, Texas. Beaubien describes Piedras Negras as a “relatively quaint” industrial city with a cobblestone square and Spanish cathedral located in the center of the city. The nostalgia present in Piedras Negras combines the Spanish past with the industrial present of this particular border town. Additionally, Dickinson suggests that within the nostalgia for the exotic exist layers of memories, or “reminiscences more directly related to the loss of community” (p. 13). Guillermo Birchelmann, economic development director for the Mexican state of Coahuila, expresses the way the fence has affected the camaraderie once shared between Piedras Negras and Eagle Pass. He states, “we just don't think that's nice between neighbors — especially neighbors that have seen themselves as family all their lives” (Beaubien, 2008). The fence’s presence between Eagle Pass and Piedras Negras has done more than just provided a physical reminder of the difference

between the two places; it has also affected the flow of commerce between the two cities. From the pedestrian gaze, a visitor to Eagle Pass's weekly flea market would notice the decline in attendance due to the increased difficulty the fence has caused border crossers. Birchelmann explains that people from Piedras Negras frequently crossed the bridge by foot to attend the flea market, but now that the fence is in place, it can take up to an hour and a half – thus, discouraging people from attempting to cross unless absolutely necessary. The pedestrian gaze allows people to see how the process of crossing the border has changed because of how evident it is to those attempting to walk through pedestrian border crossings how the fence has changed the ease with which people used to be able to pass. Furthermore, the pedestrian gaze provides further evidence of the way the differences between each side of the border are being perpetuated.

The drop in business at the Avienda Revolucion in Tijuana is another area of commerce decline revealed by the pedestrian gaze. However, unlike Piedras Negras where the business decline is a result of the fence, Tijuana's lack of American consumers has more to do with drug and crime problems. Beaubien offers this account of Avienda Revolucion nightlife in the first radio essay, "music is pumping from nightclubs and barkers are positioned outside 'gentlemen's clubs,' but there is hardly anyone on the street. Restaurants are empty, and many storefronts on what used to be the main tourist strip are shuttered" (Baubien, 2008). Just as most pedestrians know which areas of town are safe for walking, foot traffic has been low during the evening in Tijuana because people are aware of the rise in crime in the area. The rise in drug-related crime has been deterring people from America from attempting to cross into Tijuana. In fact, Beaubien explains that while he was in Tijuana interviewing people for this story, the Tijuana morgue ran out of space because the coroner picked up 100 murder victims in the course of two weeks. This

view would act as another way that nostalgia for the exotic is revealed and enacted through the pedestrian gaze.

At the same time that border cities face a lack in commerce due to increased border-crossing time and increased crime rates contribute to the nostalgia for the exotic, the division the border has created between families has increased nostalgia for home. Dickinson explains that nostalgia for home often is driven by desire for the warmth of secure familial relations. The perspective of the border that reduces all immigrants to criminals fails to recognize that immigrants are largely driven by human needs to support themselves and often to support the people they love. The majority of immigrants do not desire to work in the United States so that they can steal identities, traffic drugs or vote illegally, they are driven to immigration by the possibility of providing a better life for their families. The first radio essay provides evidence of this. People walking along the border near Tijuana will see that most of the border has been double-fenced – creating only a small area of land where people can walk freely up to the border's fence. The radio essays include a picture of this section of the fence. People are lined up across each side – talking to one another the way people talk across the plexi-glass dividers in prison visiting rooms. The first essay tells an account of two young girls playing in Friendship Park on the Mexican side of this part of the fence. On the United States side, two young men – their father and uncle – talk to them. Both men are waiting for immigration papers to provide them with immigration status, which will make them able to cross freely back and forth across the border. This would reunite them with their children on the Mexican side. The essay further describes the image of couples holding hands through the fence and a priest who comes every week to offer communion to those on the Mexican side. The border itself makes people aware of their need for the warmth of family relations, because it literally separates families from one

another.

Another example of the division the border creates between families can be seen in the stories of those who have been deported and have left families in the United States. The second radio essay provides an interview with a 45-year-old man who did not reveal his name because he was waiting to climb the fence from Nogales, Sonora and into Nogales, Arizona. He claims he and his family immigrated to the U.S. when he was five years old, and that though he never became a citizen, he has lived in California all of his life. His neighbors called the police when they heard he and his wife fighting. The domestic violence charges were never pursued, but he was deported to Tijuana. He states, “I have to go back with my family. I don't have nothing here in Mexico. All my family is in California. I have five children — I have two in Iraq right now, fighting for their country. Which I believe is my country too, because I was raised up there” (Beaubein, 2008). He explains that he will do anything to be with his loved ones even if he has to risk arrest or even getting shot while attempting to cross back. The nostalgia for home is at work in this man and many others. Home does not necessarily mean homeland; for people like this man, the United States is home, because that’s where he worked and raised his own family. Being separated from them because of his deportation makes him recognize how the border can represent both a physical and metaphorical divide between people.

Those viewing the border from the shopper’s gaze, or browse, see the same images and situations as those working from the pedestrian gaze, but they are able to see how underlying power relationships have shaped the particular memory place. For example, while a pedestrian may not feel safe walking in Tijuana, especially after dark, a person viewing the city from the shopper’s gaze would have even more insight into why the place may be unsafe. Tijuana police department captain Javier Cardenas explains in the first radio essay, “Most of the people who are

ending up dead on the streets — a lot of those people have backgrounds in the States. You can see the tattoos, you can see different things. Those are deported felons” (Beaubien, 2008). These words from Captian Cardenas may be disheartening, but someone working from the shopper’s gaze would also likely be aware that several weeks after the NPR interview with Cardenas, he and 18 other members of Tijuana law enforcement were arrested for being on the payroll of drug cartels. The shopper’s browse allows the person experiencing the cultural memory site to uncover the hidden meanings shaping the place – an awareness of how criminals and law enforcement often intertwine would only be visible from to the shopper.

The conversation with Cardenas leads the shopper to another realization – one regarding who has a vested interest in controlling the border. The understanding of how greatly the United States controls the U.S.-Mexico border goes beyond the actual fence. Although free movement across the border is desirable for many, in the interest of not only regulating crime and illegal immigration, the U.S. controls the border so that they can control trade as well. Maquiladoras, factories that litter the landscape on the Mexican side of the border and produce goods for Americans, have become an important part of the border’s landscape. Although they are clearly visible from the automobile gaze, their significance is easier to understand from the gaze of the shopper. Maquiladoras were first erected in 1965 as a part of Mexico’s Border Industrialization Program. They laid the ground for free trade into the U.S, and while their spread was slow, by 1990 there were nearly 2,000 maquiladoras pushed up against the U.S.-Mexico border (Hufbauer & Schott, 1992, p. 91). Both the first and the fourth radio essay address the pervasiveness of maquiladoras, and they way they serve as Mexico’s economic background. From the shopper’s gaze, it is easier to see the lack of regulations that maquiladoras have to follow, and the way that the vast majority of the goods produced immediately get exported into

the U.S. Providing evidence of the way the U.S. attempts to control Mexico through laws regarding the border, but at the same time is fully reliant on them for exports that are cheaper to produce due to the lower standard of workplace regulations. Much is revealed from the shopper's gaze, showing that relationships between countries and within memory places often run much deeper than a passing gaze could reveal.

This analysis of the radio essays provides insight into the vast variety of people and places that exist along the U.S.-Mexico border, and offers examples of how the border is much more complicated than simply a line between countries, languages and cultures. The radio essays provided stories of people who had been deported, people who had crossed the border and found a different (but possibly not better) life, people who did not want a wall placed between them and their southern neighbors and friends, people who believed the wall would make their cities safer, and of people who fell on all sides of the immigration debate. This analysis revealed a variety of fragmentations and legends that have shaped the border and have shaped the identities of those inhabiting and crossing through the borderlands. Despite the stories of violence and corruption among gang members, drug cartels and police officers, most of the analysis revealed an important underlying revelation about the borderlands – that the people living at and passing through the borders are people with human needs and human motivations for their actions. Yet, while humans have an inherent need to survive and maintain relationships, humans are also imperfect. Certainly arguments could be made about how someone who is living illegally in a country should not be there, but the same argument could be made for any criminal. The truth lies in the fact that humans may be driven by their need to survive and that sometimes they make mistakes, sometimes they break the law, and sometimes their actions are inexcusable. However, this does not make a person any less deserving of all the human rights that are given to another

person. The borderlands are a place of a variety of nostalgias and identities, and perhaps an analysis of how these nostalgias and identities allow people to shape their individual understandings of cultural memory can serve as a reflection that shows the underlying human aspect of the border.

## **CHAPTER 6 - Discussion**

The purpose of this research was to determine how the visual and discursive elements that constitute the border function rhetorically to communicate difference and establish place. The analysis revealed that photographs must be observed within their produced context in order to provide their audience with the messages the image producer intended. Taken out of context, a photograph can largely be interpreted by an audience to mean a variety of things. For example, the National Geographic photograph of the border fence with a baseball backstop in front of it was understood differently after knowing the context of the photograph. Bell (2002) explains that photographs are rarely shown without some context in the form of a title, caption, or description from the person showing the photographs, thus becoming their own discourse, but at the same time, “engage discourse beyond themselves” (pp. 8-9). The National Geographic photo essay chosen for this analysis is like many other photographs that are best interpreted when their context is considered.

Because photographs produce visceral reactions in their audiences, the overall composition of a photograph can create a powerful response and can aid in the understanding of the fragmentation of a place. When people view images, they often compare what they are looking at to what they know. The way viewers of the National Geographic photo essay either associate themselves with the places in the images or feel removed from them offer that viewer a better understanding of their place in relation to those in the images. These photographs, in particular, aided in the understanding of fragmentation because they often depicted the division



of two particular places and helped reveal the differences in lives lived on either side of the border. Simply perusing the individual photographs observed in the analysis instead of exploring the entire photo essay may not allow the viewer to gain a clear understanding of how inhabitants of the borderlands live or of the challenges facing those who wish to cross the border. This offers implications for those who may stumble upon individual photographs from this photo essay outside of the context of the whole essay. Postmodern theories claim that consumption of visual images is fragmented and that images seldom appear with attachments to their origin (Crotty, 1998). Although someone who views this photo essay out of its context may be more representative of the average postmodern viewer, this does not alter the fact that the viewer of the entire photo essay is in a better position to understand the message of the images. This idea provides a modern way of looking at modernity's problem – by confronting what the theory itself suggests. Thus, if one of the images from this photo essay were to appear out of context, the modern solution would be to find the other images instead of remaining content with the idea that visual images appear in fragmented ways.

Additionally, using the theory regarding the grammar of images to read maps of the borderlands helped to clarify how maps can be used to communicate difference to their audience. The line representing the border is also a line that creates areas of visual distinction on maps by emphasis of some features and the shrouding of others. A map may help tell its viewer where they exist in location to other places, but it does not tell them much about their identity within their location. Instead, it tells them where lines are drawn between places to establish locations as different from one another. The Mexican map in particular reveals more about how borderlands divide nations, because of the strong line with which international borders were denoted. The photographs also can speak to the difference people can feel from one another.

Some of the images from the Mexican side of the border reveal products and artifacts particular to Mexico (i.e. Tecate cans, the “NO IDENTIFICADO” cross, the Santa Muerte statues) that reveal differences between the countries to the American viewers of the images.

When artifacts like the photographs and maps cause people to recognize difference, the acknowledgement of this difference can allow them to simultaneously negotiate their place within this difference. However, the analysis of the radio essays provided a better understanding of how people negotiate their cultural identity within a place of fragmented memories. This negotiation can move people toward the ability to establish their own place within a larger, transitory space. This is largely because the narratives in the essay provide insight into the human experience of the border, which was a feature missing from both the photographs and the maps. Hearing the stories from people who were from a variety of places along the border provided a larger number of human perspectives for a listener to associate with, and understand their place in relation to the tellers of the stories. However, because of the volume of fragmentation and oppressive power structures pulling the identities of borderland inhabitants in different directions, establishing place cannot be considered an easy process. It involves recognizing the fragmentation and facades that exist to keep people unaware of the greater forces suppressing them.

Although the visual analysis resulted in a clearer understanding of difference and the cultural memory analysis resulted in a clearer understanding of place, it is not evident whether this discrepancy is a result of the methodology or the artifacts chosen. It is more likely that the artifacts themselves provided this implication. Photographs and maps serve to make us aware of where we exist in relation to other people and other places, but this way of revealing difference amounts to definition by the negative. Burke (1969) provides the example of how images are

often viewed as the negative because it is considered as “exclusion” or “differentiation” from other images that could exist (p. 89). The radio essays on the other hand provide narratives that people are able to associate with the experiences articulated by those being interviewed. The result of the radio essays is that listeners are left with the understanding that borders divide people who are similar than as a divider between people who are different. The two different results from the analysis chapters are not necessarily contradictory, but instead offer a more thorough understanding of the border’s rhetoric. Additional implications from this research exist on the political and methodological levels.

### **Political and Social Implications**

Though the current physical position of the U.S.-Mexico border has been relatively unchanged since the 1850s, the meaning of the border for citizens in both countries has evolved continuously. From the signing of NAFTA to the border control efforts of the Minutemen organization to the current health crisis of the Swine Flu, the discourse surrounding the border is constantly evolving – and in the process, directly affecting the lives of the people who live along or immigrate across the dividing line. Any effort to effectively speak about how this discourse affects border dwellers is difficult because it is an attempt to represent a group of people who may share a location but exist along a great spectrum of classes, nationalities, desires and reasons for their involvement with the borderlands. The lives and relationships of people involved with borderlands are anything but static. Furthermore, the fragmented and constantly evolving nature of the rhetoric of a place can hinder one’s ability to understand where and how they perform their identity within a culture and space.

The manner in which the U.S.-Mexico border is controlled consistently displays disregard for the people of Mexico and their opportunity to benefit from maintaining a friendly

relationship with the United States. Regardless of the reasons for building the fence between the two countries, the presence of the fence does not create a welcoming figure for visitors from south of the border. Furthermore, the presence of the fence denies the ‘melting-pot’ principles upon which the U.S. was founded. (e.g. “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free”) It is not as though the United States has filled to capacity and has no room for people from other countries. Rather, the new anti-immigration policies seem to provide an alternative to confronting the U.S. addiction to consumption and waste. It is understandable that U.S. citizens want to ensure their own job security and safety, and perhaps the fence was constructed for those reasons. However, the act of building a physical barrier between countries says more to the country being divided from than that the walled country wants to regulate trade and ensure the safety of its citizens; it indicates a degree of control over the other country. With the construction of the fence, the United States asserted itself as the country that gets to regulate the border and decide how relations between the two countries would work. Marx (1847) claimed, “all history has been a history of class struggles, of struggles between exploited and exploiting, of dominated and dominating” and these century-old words continue to ring true (p. 472). The multitude of ways in which the United States asserts control of the border are fundamentally exploitative of the Mexican’s labor. Though some in the U.S. may claim that Mexican immigrants make the choice to cross the border, the revelations in the radio essays as well as a clearer understanding of what U.S. policies like NAFTA and the Secure Fence Act have done to Mexican commerce and production provide a different picture. The need felt by immigrants and the potential for prosperity in the U.S. forces people to cross the border.

The findings of this analysis revealed the way the U.S. remains a hegemonic power in its relationship with Mexico. Furthermore, the analysis revealed the human aspect of the people

living at the border who experience the iniquity between the countries firsthand. The United States has extended its power throughout the world through a variety of imperialistic efforts. Unfortunately, the close proximity of the United States to Mexico has caused Mexico and other Latin American countries to be directly exploited by the U.S. Although the border serves to both discourage illegal immigrants and to protect the security of the United States, the message it reveals to Mexico – as the only country physically barred from the U.S. – is that they are the people the U.S. wants to keep out. It could be argued that other countries do not have close to as many immigrants crossing into the U.S., or that the U.S.-Mexico border has cities like Juarez and Tijuana that are particularly dangerous in terms of gang violence or drug trafficking. However, this neglects the fact that a vast number of Mexicans are not involved with either of these activities, and that their desire to live or travel to the U.S. is not a product of a desire to cause crime. The opportunities for work – and consequently to bring money home for family members – is the largest impetus for the northward migration. Using language that refers to people as “criminals” or “aliens” shows complete disregard for the human problem that the border magnifies.

### **Methodological Implications**

The field of cultural memory scholarship within rhetorical studies is relatively new, and is still developing itself. Dickinson’s method is a way to explore cultural memory and the performance of identity within particular places; yet, the method is not without its limits. Dickinson was able to perform his analysis in a nearly ethnographic style. While this provided a rich understanding of his memory place, Old Pasadena, this ethnographic style of analysis is not necessarily the most auspicious choice for cultural memory research. A documentary or radio essay like the ones chosen for this analysis provide a fair representation of the place, and his

system of moving through the place from several different gazes provides several layers to the analysis. However, with a subject as large as the U.S.-Mexico border, the place becomes reduced to its most visible or most unique locations. Though a news story about the border may do its best to represent an unbiased picture of a place as a whole, it is still likely that the most unique and most emotional stories will be the ones that come to represent the place. Additionally, Dickinson's method would likely work more clearly if one was able to actually experience the memory place firsthand. The problem with the border is that it is not only a large expanse of land, but it is not a space that one can easily move about. The problem this creates is that it is less easy for researchers to study borderlands, which are such an important location, but cannot be truly experienced in a days or weeks. Although Dickinson's method provided the best way to explore the levels of what is revealed and hidden within a memory place, it still seems more suited to a smaller and geographically confined area. Unfortunately, as important as borderlands are as sites of memory and cultural identity, analysis of them likely requires more time than of one, more spatially restricted memory place. However, it is necessary for researchers concerned with problems of cultural memory to not avoid the most important memory sites because of their inaccessibility, rather, using methods like Dickinson's can provide a starting place for these types of analysis. Dickinson's method is particularly beneficial because it recognizes the need to reconcile lost cultures of memory, and provides a method that accounts for the different ways in which people encounter memory places.

This research attempted to shed light on the ways in which people struggle to establish place and cultural memories at the borderlands and offers conclusions for scholarship of visual culture and the rhetoric of place. One of the greatest challenges of this analysis was to select a limited amount of texts to represent the visual rhetoric and cultural memory narratives that could

constitute the border. Stories about some aspect of the border are a near daily occurrence in newspapers and magazines throughout the United States, and corresponding to the increased participations in photo sharing websites like Flickr is an increasingly large volume of images of the border available to the general American public. The decision to analyze one particular photo essay, two particular maps and one set of radio essays was certainly not an arbitrary one.

However, it is nearly as difficult to defend the selections as the best possible when such a vast number of texts can adequately or even excellently represent the borderlands. Throughout the process of this research, other texts that could have offered more of certain elements arose – more photographs of people and places within the borderlands and not just the fence area, documentaries that offered video accounts of borderland inhabitants’ and immigrants’ narratives, and a series of maps that trace the progression of land accumulation by the U.S. to eventually shape the path the border takes today. However, although other texts may be able to present a richer or more typical representation of the borderland experience, the texts used in this analysis were appropriate for this research because they are some of the most accessible artifacts for the average U.S. citizen, and they each did an excellent job providing as an authentic a representation of the borderland experience as possible.

Similarly, the map analysis did not yield the rich results that were expected. Because I am passionate about maps and view them as something much greater than a directory tool, I may have overestimated what the map analysis would reveal. However, the lack of rich revelations could be due to an artifact problem or a flaw in the analysis. As was mentioned earlier, Mexican maps of the border were discovered, but this particular set of maps was not chosen because the most recent map was drawn in the late 1800s. I was hoping to find a more recent Mexican map, and the only one that I could find was the simple one drawn by the Mexican government.

However, understanding both sides of the way the border has shifted could provide additional insights into how people place themselves and how difference might be communicated through maps. Observing this set of maps through a Mexican perspective would show their country continually shrinking due to the imperialistic nature of the U.S. However, an American viewer may see this set of maps differently. For example, an American may see the shifting border as evidence of the strong military and rapidly growing technology the U.S. had access to. Placing oneself on either side of that perspective would lead to different understandings of those particular maps.

Though the borderlands are a place of tension and fragmented identities, the location of the border itself is not really under dispute – leaving the maps that exist to generally suffice. Had this research focused on a border whose position was under debate, it is possible this project could have told more about differences in international mapmaking. Although the purpose of the map analysis was to observe the different ways each country portrayed the border. Some differences arose, but none that were extremely significant. It is doubtful that a different method would have generated richer results, because the method for reading the grammar of images pays specific attention to maps and the way maps can be persuasive. If maps from the U.S. and Mexico were found that both focused specifically on the borderlands, it is possible that the analysis would have been able to focus more on subtle differences in the drawing of the border – offering a closer and more critical analysis of the maps.

## **Conclusion**

Geographical borders are not arbitrary lines drawn without a purpose, but they are also not necessarily impenetrable fortresses existing to remove one set of people from another. As rhetorical and critical/cultural scholars, it is necessary to consider the impact borders have on



relationships between people and between cultures, while often containing their own unique culture. This research benefited from the opportunity to explore both the visual rhetoric and the cultural memory issues comprising a geographical location. This analysis helped to provide insight into the human problems that exist at the borderlands, and to offer understanding of the problems that occur when people intentionally place physical barriers between one another. It is a fine line between safety of one country and the denial of freedoms to another, and the U.S.-Mexico border has been straddling this divide precariously for years. Like most cultural memory sites, this particular border is rich with opportunities for further rhetorical scholarship. Hopefully, future analysis of the U.S.-Mexico border will reveal a place that has healed past wounds, and has improved the interpersonal relationships between the people on either side.

In future scholarship, more could be done to address how people negotiate their fragmented identities and what the outcome of that might be. Although this analysis indicated that fragmentation and nostalgia occur throughout the borderlands, there is more to learn regarding how identities are ultimately understood or articulated, or if they remain forever in flux for the people inhabiting the border place. I am additionally interested in how the experience of the diasporic populations could be presented in a way that a majority of Americans could connect to. I believe the texts used in this analysis did a strong job of presenting the fragmentation and unease that come with diaspora, but I am still concerned about whether those reading or listening to the texts were able to understand this unease or fragmentation in a way that could connect them to the experience of the diasporic populations. The hundreds of racially insensitive comments left online by those who listened to the radio essays was evidence that though the message is being broadcast (literally), it is not being received in a way that will lead to understanding of the border problems. It is necessary for Americans to recognize the way

privilege keeps some from understanding the plight of those living in the borderlands. It may be easy to observe the border from afar and claim that if people want to come into our country, they are only allowed to do so by particular means and for a particular purpose. It is easy to disregard the position diasporic populations are in, and to not be aware of the root of their problems, which, in this circumstance, has much to do with the way Mexicans have been exploited for labor by Americans throughout history. Hopefully further research about borderlands, and particularly the U.S.-Mexico border will provide a way for this intercultural understanding to be reached.

Although the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo placed the U.S.-Mexico border at the physical landmark of the Rio Grande, the drawing of the border was hardly a meaningless act, and the wounds of Mexico's land loss persist. Especially now that a physical fence is being built to keep Mexicans from entering the United States, the meaning the border holds for these two countries is necessary to explore. In photographers Cook and Jenshel's field notes from the National Geographic trip across the border they retell the story of watching the news in a southern California border town. The news story revealed that a construction company who had been hired by the U.S. to build a large portion of the fence was being sued for using undocumented Mexican workers to actually construct the boundary. The U.S. wants a fence between the countries to halt or slow immigration, yet the same immigrants are hired to build the fence that the wall is supposed to deter. The sad irony of this story is representative of the struggle at the U.S.-Mexico border – the desire for international control, but the lack of resources to do it alone. The way the hegemonic system of the U.S. works, and the often-inhumane way immigrants are addressed or talked about is astounding. Hopefully, the future of the U.S.-Mexico border is one

that acknowledges the human struggle at the border, and does not disregard the needs of people struggling to understand their identities in the fragmented borderlands.

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